INTRODUCTION

_Dalit life is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Experiences that did not manage to find room in literary creation. We have grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman. And compassionless towards Dalits._¹

(Om Prakash Valmiki)

_It might help if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of the land we lived on for 50,000 years, and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours. Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless. Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given it up without a fight. Imagine if non-Aboriginal Australians had served their country in peace and war and were then ignored in history books. Imagine if our feats on the sporting field has inspired admiration and patriotism and yet did nothing to diminish prejudice. Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed. Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it._²

(Mr. Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia)

Dalit writing in India and Aboriginal writing in Australia have begun to emerge discursively as powerful visible forms of protest against a chequered history of exploitation both in socio-politically materialist and discursive realities. These subaltern discourses have thus become sites for the contestation and negotiation

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² Extract from the speech by Mr. Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia, Redfern Park, 10 December 1993, at the launch of Australia’s celebration of the International Year of the World’s Indigenous People.
of identities at several levels and in several ways. However, there is no denying
the fact that there are many divergences and convergences between these two
domain of writings. I seek to touch upon or find out some of the areas or
platforms whereby these are happening, delving into the autobiographies from
both areas of writings and examine some of the problematics involved therein. It
has been argued that the construction of 'Dalit' in India and 'Aboriginal' in
Australia as identity categories evoking a sense of homogenized collective
communities has evinced a problematic relationship within the social, historical,
political and discursive frameworks of conceptualizing national identity. This is
mainly because the socio-political and discursive marginality historically assigned
to them has been concomitant with the epistemological otherization of these
subaltern identities within the national framework.

In India, the hegemony along the axis of caste is a form of internal colonization
that has allowed for material exploitation within a social framework that has
negated the very humanity of Dalits particularly the Sudras (those Hindus who
did not fall under the categories of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas) and Ai-
Sudras (untouchables). Unlike racial minorities, though physically
indistinguishable from upper castes, yet metaphorically and literally, a Dalit has
been a 'shit bearer' for three millennia, toiling at the very bottom of the Hindu
caste hierarchy. Dalits are the main targets of what are termed 'caste-related
crimes'. Over 2000 dalits died in the three years between 1989 and 1991 as a
result of "atrocities against harijans". In the rural countryside, stripping, hacking
to death, rapes, massacres and lopping off heads are the marks of a horrific
bestiality inspired by the unshakable taints of dirtiness. The dalit body, powerful,
suppressed, and perennially dirty from such tasks as removal of dead cattle and
waste, tanning, or toddy tapping (collecting juice from the bud of palm tree

flowers) is to be violently exorcised, ritually cleansed, from the pure “Aryan” body of the Hindu caste system.

By means of legally or constitutionally guaranteed reservations (for education, employment in the public sector institutions and politics), although sections of dalits have emerged from agricultural poverty to become middle class, yet, the waters of modern opportunities flow along the fields of the upper castes, which were the main beneficiaries of the professional opportunities provided by colonialism and which also stand to gain the benefits of contemporary globalization, such as opportunities in the IT sector. Thus, while Dalit political importance and militancy rises, at the same time the Dalit remains segregated from the caste Hindu society by the invisible arms of caste.

At the literary level, the literature of India, until very recently, has never focused on the problems of the Dalits and thus the untouchables of India have continued to remain neglected and ostracized in literature as in Hindu society. The pen has, by and large, been in the hands of those who wielded power and those outside the grid of authority and agency have generally been rendered invisible, even unmentionable, in the so-called great literary texts. As a consequence the untouchables, who constitute the fifth of the Indian population have remained voiceless for several centuries. The ancient Dharma Shashtra of the Hindus imposed a series of social, political, economic and religious restrictions on the lower castes making the untouchables completely dependent on those above them. As a result, the Panchamas lived a life full of physical degradation, insults and personal & social humiliation for quite a long time. They were relegated to menial occupations only. They lived outside the village and fed over the leftovers of the high caste people. Physical contact with the untouchables was said to be “polluting” and worse still, even their shadows were considered “defiling”. Even as late as the early part of the twentieth century, the untouchables had no access to public facilities, such as wells, rivers, roads, schools, markets, etc. One of the most perverted practice was to compel the
untouchables to tie an earthen pot around their neck so that their sputum's should not fall to the earth and pollute others. Another such practice was the compulsion to tie a broom behind them, so that their footprints would be erased before others set their eyes on them. None of these issues were taken into account in the literature produced by the upper caste Hindu writers.  

Driven either by zeal for social reform or by sentimental compassion, it was at the turn of the twentieth century that a few upper caste Hindu male writers started portraying the lives of the untouchables. But they hardly did any justice to these characters. Most of the untouchable characters have been portrayed as lazy, quarrelsome, cheats, thieves, alcoholics and liars by these writers. All these negative images are the creation of Indian caste society which addresses a group of people as "untouchables" and treat them lesser than street dogs. There is hardly any chance to encounter an intouchable character who has been treated realistically like an ordinary human being full of vitality, hope as well as despair. Because of this reason Dalits have opposed the writings of non-Dalit writers. Their portrayal has been distorted and full of contradictions. Due to the absence of the authentic experience of Dalit life, these works are lifeless, shallow and distorted. The Dalits have objected to Savarnas' portrayal of Dalits by saying: "The portrayal of us bears no resemblance to us. The picture that you have drawn of us is repulsive and distorted. You don't have the capability to create a sharp and combative image of us."

Thus, Dalits have not only socio-economically & politically but also literally been neglected by the caste Hindus in India. It can be then truly argued that despite the far-reaching legislative and educational quotas for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and their undoubted benefits, dalits still are savagely attacked in the rural countryside and in the urban milieu untouchability still

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6 Ibid., P.6.
knocks at the closed doors of such institutions as the arranged marriage, the caste Hindu temple, and the private sector. The cultural hegemony of the dvija remains virtually intact. Dalitness continues to exist as much as an idea as a physical reality. The idea of the polluted bonded servant is so ingrained in the sub-continental mind that the dalit remains at the bottom of the intellectual and emotional landscape of contemporary India, however far he may advance in a public career and agitate for change. Every child born into an upper caste Hindu family grows up with a mind’s eye image of the acchut (untouchable).

An enormous body of scholarly work exists on the Indian system of castes. For Dumont, Indian society has always been defined by the hierarchy of castes. Caste “is above all, a system of ideas and values, a formal comprehensible rational system imbued with the idea of hierarchy”. “Purity” and “pollution” remain central to the caste system, indeed central to Hinduism itself, and for the Brahmin purification and hygiene are a necessity. Caste remains an invisible engine of Hindu society, creating subtle social and political linkages, functioning as a closed enclave of common practice and thought and working as a lobby or pressure group that over time creates monopolies over certain professions and businesses. Caste is today seen to have become “secularized”; that is, caste has become a modern interest group, transformed into small monopolies of economic, political, and cultural interests. Caste steps out from the shadows every time a marriage is arranged or a child is born or a new professional or business opportunity emerges.

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9 Ibid., P.35.
10 Ibid., P.52.
It has been observed that caste is, at its very base, linked to production and occupation. It is a system of labour division from which the element of competition has been largely excluded, "Economic roles are allocated by right to closed minority groups of low social status; members of the high status 'dominant caste' to whom the low status groups are bound, generally form a numerical majority and must compete among themselves for the services of individual members of the lower castes." The membership of a caste implies that a person becomes part of a person-based social network that controls insider information about economic opportunities; transmits skills; and provides varied types of human and material support. Caste is by its very definition exclusive and because of the manner in which particular castes channel themselves into particular occupations, it becomes virtually changeless. India's software industry, for example, is dominated by Tamil Brahmins; the civil service by Kayasthas from Uttar Pradesh. Thus, the dalit, the caste that exists outside the caste system, is trapped by his own economic trade. The dalit's pariahness begins with the untouchable castes becoming associated with those groups specializing in "impure" tasks, such as cleaning out waste, skinning cattle, working in leather, butchery, fishing, and supervising cremations. Leather workers, washermen, scavengers, undertakers, toilet cleaners, toddy tappers, sweepers and rural labourers were polluted because of their work. Their role in the caste-based economic system meant that the modern dalits, descended from the professionals of impure tasks, are heirs to centuries old filth, professional as well as psychological.

What is shocking and surprising is the fact that myriad practices existed and still exist to denote the pollution of the dalit. Not only could the dalit not enter a Hindu temple or drink water from temple tanks, but he had to live in segregated huts on the outskirts of villages. In parts of South India in the nineteenth century,

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15 Gandhi's campaign of cleaning out toilets by the upper castes, forcing his own wife to clean out human waste, and enforcing upper-caste menial labour in his model villages was a fundamental attack on the untouchability of such labour.
dalit women were forbidden to cover their breasts. Dalits had to beat a drum to signal their arrival so the brahmin knew where to hide or how to protect his food. The brahmin is most vulnerable to pollution when he is eating, so if a shadow of a dalit fell on his food, the food too became untouchable. On occasion dalits had to wear a spittoon so that his spittle did not fall on his surroundings and he could never stand in the way of a wind that might carry his smell or breath to a brahmin.

However, there are qualifications to untouchability. Instances can be found of dalit midwives, local functionaries, and local soothsayers and saits who have been revered by all sections of society. There are also instances of dalits participating in caste Hindu festivals sections of dalits have also sometimes engaged in upper-caste rituals. Yet, the dalit as pariah played a crucial role in allowing the upper castes a monopoly on education and in certain “pure” trades. Because of the divine sanction for eternal serfdom, the denial of education and thus opportunities for advancement, upper castes where able to successfully eliminate masses of people from the competitive economy that developed under colonial rule. It has been argued that since Hindu culture is dominated by religion, the intellectual entrapment of the dalit cannot be eased unless a large scale re-writing of the Hindu holy texts takes place.

In Australia, the images that Europeans have constructed of Australia’s indigenous inhabitants have both shaped the nature of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations and provided the framework within which Aboriginal history has been and is still being written. If it true, that rarely in Australia’s history of contact between indigenous Australians and their non-Aboriginal counterparts has there been a favourable representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and lifestyle. In Australia, Aboriginal people are hostage, in the main, to images created by non-Aboriginal Australians. It has been said that the

16 See Harrison, 1960.
power of a people to say who they are, to define their icon identity and to relate their history is fundamental to their existence. To deny a people their law, languages and the use of their land is a denial of basic human rights. These fundamentals of civilisation were systematically stripped away from most of the indigenous people of Australia by colonization. As Dalits are fighting against 'casteism' in India, Aborigines are fighting against 'racism' in Australia. Aboriginal people have lived with racism since colonization. In the present day, racism is not so rife as in earlier times, but it still raises its ugly head in this modern day Australian society. Racism is though officially outlawed in terms of the formation government bodies such as the Radical Discrimination Act passed in 1975 and the Equal Opportunity Act of 1984 established to combat any discrimination based on race, however, there are still Australian people who denigrate others because of their race. Racism is the biggest scourge (curser misfortune) Aborigines have had to line with and they are still fighting an insidious form of racism that keeps them apart from enjoying the equality and equity that other Australians take for granted and enjoy in that country. Aboriginal people want to be accepted as a people with as much rights and responsibilities as other Australians. They do not want to be differentiated against (by racist remarks) or thought of as different from the human race just because they are Aborigines, but want to live their lives free from the scourge of any kind of racism because they have much to offer to this in every way. Their fight for social justice in the arena of racism is ongoing until white Australians accept Aborigines as an integral or important part of Australian society.

The past over two hundred years of Australian history has been dominated and formulated by a network of 'white' discovers. Specifically, official representations of the relationships between 'Aboriginal' and 'non-Aboriginal' societies have been written by the 'colonisers' to construct an official Australian
history. This 'history' has ensured the relegation of 'Aboriginal' history and heritage to a mythical time pre-1788 and thus these official constructions of history are instrumental in the subjugation and marginalisation of knowledges from displaced peoples. It can be argued that history, specifically official Australian history, seems to be a fiction that both creates and substantiates a political reality that is itself fictitious. A more equitable account of Australian history post – 1788 is possible if official history is mediated by a reading of 'Aboriginal' literature as history. It can also be asserted that counter-histories that both disrupt the apparent linearity and homogeneity of 'white' historiography and foreground previously subjugated. 'Aboriginal' knowledges are emerging in a growing body of writings by 'Aboriginal' authors (designated as 'literature') that can be read as 'history'.

From 1788, which Aboriginal people call the invasion and non-Aboriginal people call British settlement, most representations of Australian people have been produced and controlled by others. This representation has been biased, culturally prescriptive and judged against non-Aboriginal values because those new arrivals to this continent did not see any positive attributes among the Aboriginal people and believed in their own superiority. There was little, if any, communication between the Indigenous peoples and the newcomers about culture, language and belief. Very few people communicated directly with Indigenous Australians using Indigenous languages in the early years. Subsequently, the land was declared desert and uninhabited later represented as terra nullius and the various Aboriginal nations declared uncivilized. It should not be forgotten that when the British claimed sovereignty over this country in 1788 and colonised the land as 'terra nullius', the Aboriginal people were subject to grave injustices and have suffered the consequences of the 'terra nullius' theory, or assumption since then. As a result Aborigines not only suffered the

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20 Ibid., P.1.
loss of their land, but also suffered the degradation and dehumanisation that British colonisation left in its wake. Furthermore, to the indigenous people of Australia and the Indigenous peoples throughout other lands, European colonisation was to disrupt their lifestyles, their cultural practices, ideologies and heritage to the point that some were totally wiped out. In the state of New South Wales, Aboriginal people were forced to leave their lands and go onto government controlled reserves. It was commonly believed by white settlers that the Aborigines would soon die off, and the reserve land would be sold and used for farming — but, by the start of the 1900s, a new generation of Aboriginal children was growing up in the reserves. This fact, combined with the large-scale arrival of white immigrants from Europe, changed the Aboriginal life forever.

Moreover, when it became clear that the Aboriginal people would not die off, the protection board for the Aborigines decided to break up all Aboriginal communities. They would then sell the land to the newly arrived Europeans for farming. The board started by taking away all the rights away from Aborigines to own or use reserve lands; the Aborigines could own nothing. The reserves were made a training ground for Aboriginal children to become servants. The protection board had plans to remove Aboriginal children from their reserves and place them under the control of white employers. After these children were removed, they were never allowed to return home. The white society thought it would be in the best interest of the child to remove her from the corrupting influence of her Aboriginal family; they would send the girls to an institution or foster home, and train her to become a servant. There were no rules or regulations for the treatment of the Aboriginal children who were sent to work. In addition, in the middle of the twentieth century, Aborigines worked for flour, sugar, and tea rations on the cattle stations of northern, central and western Australia. Aboriginal women on cattle stations often worked harder than the men, who were mostly stockmen. The women not only had hard domestic chores — such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and caring for children — but, they also worked as cattle drivers; with camel teams; as shepherds; road repairers; water
carriers; house builders; and gardeners. If they tried to escape, they were captured and beaten.

What is more, it was the women who were responsible for keeping Aboriginal groups together in camps and on these properties. They cared for their children and for their men. The older women taught traditional skills and customs to the younger generation. Most girls who were removed from their white employers ended up in Sydney working for the middle-class white people. These girls usually were awakened before 5:30 a.m. to do all of the household jobs. Employers had the girls working seven days a week. However, they only got paid a small amount, and often got nothing. The middle-class 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. More so, the forced removal of Indigenous children happened in every state and territory of Australia. The separation of Aboriginal children started in Victoria and New South Wales as early as 1885 and, in some states, was not stopped until the 1970s. About 85% of Aboriginal families have been affected in some way, either by having children taken away from them or by being forced to make major decisions to avoid having their children taken. Mothers of some Aboriginal children would cover their fair-skinned children with black clay; hide them in trees, behind sand dunes, or in hollow logs. In addition, often the white people would send Aboriginal women out into the white community, and if they came back pregnant, the rule was to keep each woman for two years and then take the child away; sometimes mother and child would never see each other again. There were no rules or regulations for the treatment of the Aboriginal children who were sent to work. The children then grew up in a white community knowing nothing of the Aboriginal culture and environment. It was not until 1967 that Aboriginal people had a vote about their treatment in society.

Turning now to the dimensions at the level of literary discourse, Dalit writing in India and Aboriginal writing in Australia are not recognized as full-
fledged marketable 'national' literatures. While 'Dalit' literature has been recognized as a field of rich academic possibilities by the Indian academic echelons 'Dalit' literature has been unproblematically equated with Maharashtrian Dalit literature especially that which is available in easily consumable translated anthologies. This situation is changing slowly as English translations of Telegu, Tamil and Kannada, Hindi, Oriya dalit literatures are becoming available. It has, however, not changed sufficiently for dalit literature to be considered nationally or internationally marketable as bonafide 'Indian' literature. In the same way, in Aboriginal writing the emphasis in terms of course structuring in literature programs, the availability of texts at universities' and the High Commission libraries and focus in translation programs, remains by and large on the canonized white Australian male writers — Patrick white, Thomas Keneally and, David Malouf. Judith Wright and say, an Aboriginal writer like Sally Morgan or Ruby Langford are added on occasionally as token representatives of the gender and Aborigine erasures of what is exported as a 'national' literary canon. Furthermore, it can be easily observed that as these 'new literatures' are opened up for academic research and study in the postcolonial framework of both countries, the subaltern voice is variously mediated, appropriated, co-opted, accommodated and commodified. The dalit or tribal or Aboriginal 'predicament' too finds greater publicity when mediated represented or incorporated in the texts of mainstream writers. As the subaltern begin to make themselves heard, being spoken for — appropriation of voice — however sympathetic/emphatic, fails to be unproblematic. The premise seems to be that unless these discourses/literatures and its texts are made 'accessible' to the dominant/mainstream literatures in English discourse-market through translation and commodification its protests and substance will not easily leave the domain of an ethnic soliloquy by the subaltern constituency, of the subaltern constituency and for it.

The main purpose of my research is to do a comparative study and find out major divergences and convergences between Dalit writings and Aboriginal
writings by seeking to look more closely at one of the most important literary forms — Autobiography. Autobiographies from both domain of writings have been taken for my research. From Dalit writing, I have dealt with the following Autobiographies: *Joothan* (Om Prakash Valmiki); *The Outcaste* (Akkarmashi) Sharankumar Limbale; *Growing up Untouchable in India* (Vasant Moon); *Outcaste* (Narendra Jadhav) and *Karukku* (Bama). From Aboriginal writings I’ve chosen the following Autobiographies: *My Place* (Sally Morgan); *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (Ruby Langford); *An Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New* (Elsie Roughsey).

As for Aboriginal Autobiographies, it has been claimed by many Aboriginal women writers that while the narrative they unfold is their personal story, their experiences are similar to those of many other Aboriginal women. For this reason their autobiographies can be viewed as ‘testimonies’ to the way Aboriginal people were treated by non-Aboriginal people. Many of the writings are a “testimony” to the struggle to survive because of the human rights denied to Aboriginal people. Sexual violation in many cases was perpetrated by station-owners, and males in households where Aboriginal women were employed as domestic servants. In most of the Autobiographies, I have referred to at least one of the women in the family was either raped, sexually violated, or harassed by a non-Aboriginal man she worked for, or did not know. Aboriginal women’s writing is also a ‘witnessing’ to the rights, or lack of rights, citizenship given to the Aboriginal people living in a liberal society. It is true that one of the oldest tenets of liberalism is equality before the law of legal rights, equality of citizenship. Having citizenship means individuals have access to a number of social goods: for instance, voting rights, medical attention, social security, legal rights, police protection, etc. What the Aboriginal Autobiographies under consideration reveal is that Aboriginal people were not given even citizenship right (which they got in 1967) and without citizenship right many Aboriginal people were denied the basic

legal and health rights. It can be argued that by reading these autobiographies from the standpoint of the Aboriginal women’s experiences, through different reading practices, these narratives can be viewed as a communal “telling” of the collective experience of people’s judged as ‘inferior’ by the dominant social order. Yet, at the same time, these writings are a form of resistance to the discourses in the form of practices of the dominant group.

As far as the Dalit writing is concerned, it is contesting both the very basis of caste-discrimination as well as the institutional claim that caste no longer functions as a social force in modern India. By writing about their own experiences as a Dalit, Dalit writers reveal mainly two objectives in their autobiographies. One is to contest the basis of caste discrimination. For example, in *Joothan*, Valmiki writes:

> Being born is not in the control of a person. If it 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?²³

The other clear narrative agenda of these Dalit autobiographies 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, transportation, etc. Thus, Dalit autobiographies constitute a challenge to this institutional narrative by presenting before us what they claim are ‘factual’ experiences of untouchability from the writer’s own life. Valmiki, for instance, does this by repeatedly narrating his experience of pain as exclusion due to the continued practice of untouchability. 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. Having escaped the confines of the village, availed of reservation, a rise in their class status, these writers continue to experience caste-based discrimination despite their many 'successes'. Thus, the narrative agenda of Dalit autobiographies is to expose the continuation of caste discrimination, even in modern times, and even in the urban centres of India. It attacks the basis of this caste discrimination in a variety of ways, but especially through a stable focus on the 'factual' recounting of experiences of discrimination. Furthermore, the autobiography serves the additional function of re-affirming and strengthening the link between the individual Dalit writer and the larger Dalit community. Finally, Dalit autobiography is considered a form of political assertion for a number of reasons. Besides giving Dalit entrance into a public space through identity-based narrative authority, autobiography provides a space for Dalit writers to regain control over the constitution and meaning of Dalit selfhood and join in a show of strength with the larger 'Dalit' community.

In comparing the two literatures, it has been necessary to compare the Australian Aboriginal and Dalit societies as well. Given that the two societies are different in terms of place and time, country, region, conditions and languages, it is understandable that there should be certain similarities and on the other hand certain limitations and differences too. The characteristics of, and the convergences and divergences between the two literatures have been investigated thoroughly in chapter 3 and chapter 4 respectively. To mention a few, Dalit and Aboriginal literatures are mirror images of the lives, sorrows, problems, pain and revolts of Dalits and Aboriginals. There are numerous expressions of red-hat experience and fighting instinct in these literatures. The most important similarity between Dalit autobiographies and Aboriginal autobiographies is the difficult struggle these writers face to gain the right to speak. More than anything else, the 'right' or 'ability' of the marginalized group to write literature comes under immediate contestation. Both literatures speak about struggles for human rights and against exploitation. Despite differences of
country & conditions etc., the similarity in the life experience of the two communities derives from the fact that both were targets of excess, injustice and exploitation — their experience of pain is of a world-scale. There are similarities in the feelings of ownership, entitlement and superiority demonstrated by white and savarna societies, on the one hand, and of revolt against caste/racial discrimination by Dalits and Aboriginals, on the other. Moreover, Dalit and Aboriginal literary commentators have rejected both the patronizing, sympathetic representations of white and savarna writers, as well as the unrealistic and pitying portrayals of Dalits and Aboriginals. Dalits and Aboriginals speak and write about people who suffer from injustice in their own societies as well as in other societies. That is why the human being has become the centre point of both these literatures. Bagul rightly observes:

_Dalit literature is precisely that literature which accepts the liberation of humanity, regards the greatness of the human being, and strongly opposes the superiority of race, varna and caste._

Phrases such as "only he or she who has suffered this anguish knows its sting" clearly delineate narrative authority for the Dalit writer. It can be seen how the entire life-narrative in both literatures is based on the idea of the communal identity. Subjectivity in these autobiographies is thus complicated by the deep connection between the individual self and the communal self. The fact that the ways narrative and autobiographies have been used as a means of political assertion by marginalized groups will be foregrounded between the chapters. The Autobiographical narrative is perceived as the actual site of the power struggle, where the voice of the marginalized individual contests the institutionalized narrative of the dominant group. Let us have a cursory look at the major issues of convergences and divergences between Dalit and Aboriginal autobiographies:

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Convergences:
- issues of identity
- literatures of revolt
- both targets of injustice, exploitation
- the experience of pain
- feelings of ownership, entitlement & superiority demonstrated by white and savarna societies; feeling of revolt demonstrated by Dalits and Aboriginals.
- fighting against social and physical exploitation
- fighting for social justice and human rights
- based on the idea of communal identity
- the 'individual' self becomes the 'communal self'.
- civic rights violation
- violation of political rights
- economic/social deprivation/discrimination
- discrimination in education and employment
- look peoples used as slaves/maidservants
- sexual exploitation

Divergences:
- different country, region, conditions, society and language.
- Aboriginals degraded by the whites where as Dalits by savarna society.
- Aboriginal people fighting against racial discrimination based on colour.
- Dalits fighting against caste discrimination by savarna society based on birth.
- Aboriginal people dealing with
  (a) land right issues
  (b) the stolen-generation of Aboriginal children
  (c) black deaths in custody
  (d) women sexual exploitation
  (e) European policies of Assimilation and nihilation etc.
(f) Issues of multiculturalism and reconciliation.

{g} Dalits can become oppressive whereas Aboriginals cannot. Thus, both writings evince a form of 'resistance literature'. They exemplify a form of 'testimony' to the kind of injustices that occur to them and also to the struggles to survive because of the human rights denied to them.

Chapter 1, "Socio-Historical and Political Profiles of Dalits in India" introduces the concept and explores the roots of contemporary Dalit literature and Dalit experience. In comparing two literatures, it has been necessary to compare the Aboriginal and Dalit societies. Therefore, this chapter further presents an outline of socio-economic conditions of Dalits in India and also looks at the major factors or main indicators of socio-economic status of Dalits in India. 'Socio' refers to people and the ways they fit into the community in which they live. It refers to how well they are educated, whether they have jobs, and other factors mentioned ahead. 'E economic' refers to the financial position of groups within society including how much they earn, whether they own their own home and the type of assets (inheritances, savings, property etc.) they have. The main indicators of socio-economic status are:

**Social indicators:**
- education
- health
- contact with the criminal justice system
- employment/unemployment level
- type of occupation/job
- housing
- access to services? water, sewerage etc.

**Economic indicators:**
- income, salary, wages etc.
- level of dependency on welfare payments.
Chapter 2, "Socio-historical and political profile of Aboriginals in Australia", as the title suggests presents an outline of socio-historical and political conditions and circumstances of Aboriginal people in Australia. It traces the history of how British colonized Australia and the Aboriginal struggles during colonisation. In other words, it looks at the historical background of Aboriginal people of Australia. This chapter throws light on the theoretical perspective of how the Aboriginal people were controlled and managed by the white people by means of implementing various harsh and torturous policies of Assimilation, segregation, nihilation etc. Moreover, this chapter traces the development of Australian Aboriginal literature and the purpose of Aboriginal literature. Aboriginal literature has been highlighted thoroughly in this chapter. This chapter ends with current socio-economic status of Aboriginal people and a short overview of law and policy making since 1788 which concerns the development of the progress between the Australian constitution and Aboriginal people. It also takes up the issues of major legislation that has affected Aboriginal people; commonwealth legislation or 'Law of the land' and finally turning points in the application of Aborigines Protection Act (1909) in NSW.

Chapter 3, "Convergences: Dalit writings and Aboriginal writings", explores various aspects and major issues of convergences between the Dalit writings and the Aboriginal writings by looking at the autobiographies under consideration. It also brings out a very good argument on the issue of Dalit and Aboriginal aestheticism before delving into the major issues of convergence between the two domain of writings. To explore the aspects of convergence, it also makes a comparative study of human predicaments illustrated in Dalit and Aboriginal autobiographies. Turning to each autobiography under consideration, this chapter highlights the several ways in which Aboriginal writings and Dalit writings are similar to each other and shows in what manner both literatures,
being marginal literatures, express their protests against exploitation and injustices occurred to them.

Chapter 4, “Divergences: Dalit writings & Aboriginal writings”, seeks to explore a range of issues of divergence between Dalit writings and Aboriginal writings. It puts emphasis on how Dalit writings and Aboriginal writings are different from each other or in other words, what are the major issues and factors which characterize both literatures to possess different paths in their writings. This chapter, to start with, looks at the caste oppression in India then Dalit autobiographies under consideration, and the racial discrimination in Australia and then Aboriginal autobiographies under consideration. It also looks at how Dalit writings and Aboriginal writings are fighting against two different kinds of oppressions: one against caste oppression and another against racial oppression which makes them to be having two different ideologies and thus being different from each other. This chapter examines the human predicaments of Dalit and Aboriginal societies depicted in the autobiographies under consideration.

Chapter 5, “Contemporary Politics: The Political and Literary struggle”, explores the aspects of the contemporary political and literary struggle of Dalit people in India and Aboriginal people in Australia for control over their affairs. It also highlights the different ways in which Dalit as well as Aboriginal people seek to achieve self-determination. To start with, this chapter shows how Dalit politics in contemporary India represents a Janus of two contradictory movements: on the one side, there is a face representing the hope of progress and on the other, there is a strange tale of regression. It also examines the various relationships between the Dalits and other political parties and shows how most of the national and state parties contest from the reserved seats for the Dalits and add them in their kitty to grab the power.

At the literary level Dalit literature as well as Aboriginal literature are still not recognized as full-fledged marketable 'national' literature. Both literatures have
been neglected by the mainstream writers. Today both Dalits and Aboriginals claim a stake, both in knowledge and the power more strongly than ever before.

This chapter also takes up the issue of who defines and speaks for Aboriginal people. Most Australians have stereotypical images of Aboriginal people which are the result of non-Aboriginal concepts built on views of European superiority. It outlines the challenges of Aboriginal people to the history of European and Aboriginal relations since 1788 as written by the “victors”. It traces the determination of Aboriginal people to be heard and to present their own versions of what has happened in the past over 200 years.

As a collection, these chapters are intended to introduce areas/platforms/factors whereby divergences and convergences between Dalit writings and Aboriginal writings are happening in comparative form. In order to justify the above-mentioned proposition, these chapters address the following questions: What are the convergences and divergences between Aboriginal and Dalit writings? How far and in what measure these subaltern writings have transformed the full dimension to the cruelties and humiliation they had suffered, into literary expression and experience? How does the narrative agenda within the autobiography form an anti-caste narrative or anti-racial discrimination narrative? How are they engaged with identity politics in an attempt to understand the kind of identity asserted in these autobiographies as well as the boundaries of these identities? How do these autobiographies represent an attempt to assert a new form of socio-historical narrative? And lastly, where do the present trends in both writings lead to? It also highlights the positions of Dalits in the Constituent Assembly by focussing on the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950. This chapter concludes with latest views and comments on the educational empowerment of Dalits in India.