



URMILA PAWAR’S “AAYADAN” - A NEW PERSPECTIVE

The present chapter discusses about Urmila Pawar as a Dalit writer with reference to her autobiography ‘Aaydan.’ This is a story of three generations and transformation of growth of a woman to establish herself as a noted feminist and dalit writer. It was not easy for Pawar to achieve this without persistent efforts and determined mind.

7.1 Urmila Pawar: A profile

Urmila Pawar is a literary personality, known for her short story writings in Marathi literature. She was born and brought up in Kokan region of Maharashtra state. She was born in the year May 1945 at Adgaon village of Ratnagiri District. Today, she is known as a feminist writer and leader of Women’s lib movement. As a dalit writer, she has established herself after Daya Pawar, Baby Kamble and Shantabai Gokhale as the prominent voice of Dalit literature. Her memoir ‘Aaydan’, which was published in the year 2003 and was translated by Dr. Maya Pandit as *The Weave of my life: A Dalit woman’s Memoir*.

‘Aaydan’ means weaving of cane baskets. It was the main economic activity of the mahar community, whom, she belongs. There is another meaning to the word Aaydan; it is utensils used by them. The Mahar community was staying in the central location of the village, as they could be useful to the upper caste people for their sanitation related works as well as to protect themselves from the attacks from outsiders.

'Aaydan' is a weaving of basket by Burud community of Ratnagiri district. Even mahar people were busy in weaving of basket before plastic entered in their life style. Pawar writes,

*"My mother used to weave Aaydan and I was writing this book, both were activities of creation of thought and practical reality of life."*¹

An Autobiography as a genre, which is rarely practiced by Indians as compared to that of poetry and fiction. It problematized the major issues of class caste, and gender in the Indian context. Apart from recording a woman's discovery of selfhood and assertion of identity, it also offers a background picture of the Indian culture, including interpersonal and inter-communal relations, clashes, and tolerances.

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

Pawar narrates the incident in her memoir like this,

*"Aye was weaving her baskets as usual. She did not see me when I crossed her and entered the house. Her face looked worried. She was engrossed in her own thoughts and her fingers flew over the basket. Going to her, I told her about the scholarship and held the twelve rupees before her. Suddenly her face lit up with a sunny smile and eyes sparkled."*²

7.2 Urmila Pawar as Dalit Writer

Pawar was much sensitive about her caste as well as her poverty so during school period onwards her conscious mind was aware of the limitations of person of lower caste and meaning of poverty not described in the books, but in reality. As she writes,

“The upper caste girls always used words like ‘Ladu’, ‘Modak’, ‘karanjya’, ‘Puranpolya’. They brought such novel items in their tiffin boxes as well as at times we went on excursions. However, I never asked myself the stupid question, why we do not prepare such dishes at home? We were aware, without anybody telling us, that we were born in a particular caste and in poverty, and that we had to live accordingly.”³

The other important reference about the community living and exploitation of the women is seen in their food preparations at home. It is very evident from the memoir that separate food preparations were done for men and women and particularly the daughter-in-law is exploited up to maximum level. Pawar as a feminist and as a dalit woman has highlighted an issue .as she writes,

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

Well, what they cooked was fish water!

Someone has had a bellyful and how!

She wears a short sarees, down to the feet now

To hide what ‘trickling down from her butt.’⁴

This sagar used to be the regular diet for daughter-in-laws.

Conversion was the main activity in those days in the days of Buddha - Ambedkar revolution of change in religious faith. After Govindadada's conversion to Buddhism and keeping portrait of Dr. Ambedkar on the wall, the signs of change were visible even in the rituals of marriage and other religious activities.

As Urmila mentions,

“The older rituals to mark birth, marriage and death were given up and new ones gradually came to be finalized, according to Buddhist religion.”⁵

7.3 Unfolding Aaydan

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

“Once, I went to attend wedding at my sister-in-law's place, along with two of my nieces. However, when we three spout girls set down to eat and begun asking rice repeatedly, the cook got angry, ‘Whose daughters are these anyway?’ He burst out. ‘They are eating like monsters’ then someone answered ‘they are from our’” Sushi's family! Daughters of Arjun master!’ On hearing this, the host came forward. ‘Oh! Are they? All right, all right let them eat as much as they want! Serve them well!’ The cook returned with more rice but being called monster was not easy to digest and we politely declined.’⁶

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

“What should I bring? Nothing, they said.’ You must bring some money “7

They were going to girl’s house called Tarlatan Savant as her parents were away. Girls cooked at a like Sushi Dhaka, Kamal Chaman and Sunland Bhopal cooked a simple but tasty meal of rice, dal and vegetables. As Pawar writes this painful incident,

“They did not allow me to touch anything. However, we all ate together. I really enjoyed the meal. The next day I was horrified to hear that my eating had become the hottest topic for juicy gossip. Girls were whispering in groups about ‘how much I had eaten.’”8

It was very humiliating that Urmila felt thousands death that day. This narration shows two important issues in the cultural inheritance of the country .Children show signs of caste distinctions and Untouchability as well as, poor people is humiliated for their hunger. The transformation of religious activities also took place after Dr.B.Ambedkar’s Maha Nirwan .It was unanimously decided by the villagers to discard all Gods and Goddesses and replace them by Dr. Ambedkar’s photo and Lord Buddha’s photo. As Urmila narrates,

“We put all of them in a basket .In fact, the silver and the brass would have fetched a tidy amount if we had sold the stuff. However, we have firmly resolved to discard the gods with all the accompanying paraphernalia. Therefore, we went to the river with the other people, the young children in row. On the way, people chanted the same traditional invocation but with a completely different set of words:

*O ye Gods;
Yes that’s right, Maharaja,
Go back to your own place.
‘Yes that’s right, Maharaja
You never did well to us.’”9*

The community was having faith in the blind faith and unethical and inexperienced medical assistance. Her father has never taken care of Sushi, her elder sister after her marriage; she died with her own agony and pain. Sometimes, Urmila Pawar feels that for outsiders and society, her father was a reformist but for his own daughters he has patriarchal approach. She narrates the case of Parvati, sister-in-law, who has no say in her house or to eat on her own. She was living a hopeless life. Pawar shows through her case the exploitation and oppression of women. This is similar to the Black Feminist theory, where they accept the harsh reality of being woman and black, so exploited both the ways from white people as well as the male counterparts of their own community. When, Pawar refers to her school life and sharing of lunch boxes experience, she has specifically mentioned the items prepared by the upper class students and the variety of items attracted her but considering her economic condition at home, she never imagined even to talk about them at home. She felt humiliated in her English language class where, her teacher used to abuse her for her poor command over the subject. He used to scold her,

“This is English, the milk of tigress; it is not easy, like acting in plays.”¹⁰

She has narrated her experiences of sexual exploitation at her early adulthood and about her schoolmates. This narration and incidents of sexual exploitation are evident in her memoir,

“My maternal uncle plays dolls with me and pretends to be my husband drags me into an alcove and presses me hard.”¹¹

Urmila's sister started learning in high school. After some weeks, there are certain changes observed in her language and attitude for her mother, sister-in-law and others. The respectful way she was addressing her family members shows the sign of change in women with education and change of reformation in the community. Her sister used to speak plural verb form like the Brahmins. Pawar's objection for this type of approach was for two reasons – (1) deviating away from the community language and (2) from feminist point of

view, if you unnecessarily respect others you yourself degrade you in the eyes of others without reason.

She has given narration of wife beating incidents at the home front as well as at the community. The narration of pathetic incident of beating a pregnant woman only based on blind faith is as touchy as well as alarming for the generations to follow. This type of misunderstanding happened with Pawar, when one day she was found missing until late night. That day she was with Harishchandra opposite school gate near seashore. However, the entire family thought that some Ghost spirit has occupied her and this has created confusion in the family. Her mother exclaimed,

*“Thank God! The ghost did not crumble you up. The God of this place has saved you! It is the spirit of the ancestor’s that has protected you!”*¹²

Like Kamla Das Pawar has described her first night experience which cannot forget as she has earned a label as ‘frigid’ as she narrates,

*“Never mind! My husband’s hands were groping all over my body. The tiny room with its peeling walls, the single iron bed with its creaking iron strips, the smelly, moldy mattress with hard lumps of cotton, the dirty, stained, old bedspread, the flat hard pillow smelling like a naphthalene bag.....the sharp yellow strip of light from the bulb piercing the eye...”*¹³

She felt little bit upset but again the second thought came to her mind that it might be the wish of the husband himself. A sign of her being virgin. If she had taken any initiative, he would have suspected her virginity. She thought that she was aware of every move but she remained salient.

Urmila remembers her first salary she has received after her marriage and it indicates her happiness at one point but at the same time, she was aware that she has to give it to Harishchandra her husband. Therefore, the characters are only changed but the dependence has remained the same. Urmila notes,

“When I got my first salary, I could not believe that all that money was mine; that I could spend it the way I liked. Before my marriage, I used to hand over my salary to my mother; now I started handling it over to my husband. If this is not like deliberately offering head for the butcher’s knife, what else is it?”¹⁴

Harishchandra, Urmila Pawar's husband also got the bad experience of caste differences when he left his job at Ratnagiri and joined the office of District of Superintendent. Harishchandra had understood the strong caste barriers prevailing even in upper castes also. Even the educated people treated him like an untouchable. This horrible experienced had changed his mind and decided to go for a job in the city He has reached to the conclusion very strongly for the discrimination due to low caste treatment and decided not to do job in the village. He remembers the call given by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to youngsters that they should go to the city and forget the caste barrier.

Pawar feels strongly that self-respect received by man is very natural which is difficult for the woman to achieve without efforts. Her inner transformation started with participation in drama at the school / college days and her strong faith in reading books, about Babasaheb Ambedkar and other Dalit writers. Pawar has also given an account of specific surnames their community have as she writes,

“Kacharya (Dirt), Honda (stone) Magadha (stone) Bhikya (beggar). Then names began to be written with English initials, like, R.L.Tambe, K.D.Kadam, G.B.Kabmle, and so on.”¹⁵

Pawar got enough opportunity for developing her writing skills while doing job at Mumbai office. She was getting enough leisure time to do her writing of short stories, drafting articles, developing women friends and creating awareness about their problems. Her 'Kathakathan stories and traditional approaches were meant to bring changed in the community a little bit.

She remembers the incident of her admission to M.A., course where her husband Harishchandra took strong objections .He was a traditional husband and was expecting that Pawar should spare more time in household things like the other community women. She

should nurture children's health, their education and to look after the house keeping business as a typical wife. Pawar could realize for the first time in her life. She could see that her husband's ego is hurt and he could not seem to tolerate higher qualified wife than him. His traditional patriarchal dictate started peeping in and straight away, he denied her and instructed not to go ahead for M.A. course. Neither there was any encouragement as such from the home front, nor was there a tradition in the family of pursuing an activity. Once, her friend Heena Bansode told her about women's organization 'Maitrini', where she could meet noted women personalities like Chhaya Datar, Vidya BAL and Usha Mehta. Pawar recollects her first invitation to read a short story at Sahitya Sammelana at Vikroli where luckily she could witness the publication of Padmashree Daya Pawar's Baluta. An important discussion was held about form of an autobiography. Prominent speakers like Daya Pawar, Bhaushaeb Adsul, and Appa Ranpise were on the stage including Pawar herself. As Pawar writes,

“Adsul said in this book, Daya Pawar has torn to shreds the dignity of our mothers and sisters! Had Babasaheb Ambedkar alive today, he would have kicked this book out.”¹⁶

Pawar shows the distinction of male female positions and titles awarded to them. She says when any man is promoted he would become a 'Bhaushaeb' or 'Raosaheb' but a woman officer will remain only a 'Bai' without the title of Sahib. As a Dalit writer, she felt much as it is an insult to her position and caste. Due to English language, today all women are called 'Madam' irrespective of their position. This has generated the question of self-respect among the women.

Pawar has highlighted the other important issue of male child through the example of her own brother Sahu. The attraction for male child is highlighted when her brother had son. The namkaren was to be performed at Ratnagiri. The word Namkaran has replaced the Marathi local word Barse. On this occasion in a discussion the sisters have raised the issue of property rights of girls after marriage. Dr. Babasaheb's New Hindu code bill is also discussed.

“Don't you know that Babasaheb had asked in the Hindu code Bill to give the daughters their share of property? So come on, get up now!”¹⁷

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

Pawar has also narrated the story of Joyti who has attempted to steal other woman's child for the cause male child craze of her husband. She has reflected in her story 'Shalya'. Joyti's story that gave birth to five daughters. When she was pregnant for the sixth time, she was afraid that her husband would torture her for the girl child. She got her daughter exchanged with other unmarried girl who has delivered a baby boy. Pawar writes that when she was invited to read this story at function Harischandra insisted that they should keep their son together to show to others that they have in real life a son. .Similarly the issue of daughters' parental rights after marriage, which is a sensitive issue that she has focused through her own example while leaving Ratnagiri house.

Baba Saheb's attempts for removal of blind faith and religious rituals also reflected through her sister in law's character, she has also referred the historical Marathi Sahitya Kokan conference where she could meet Ramakant Shadan Chadrahas Gadre, Prakash Karat, and P V Shashikant Lokhande. This conference was held on 5 January 1991 and in this conference, it was decided to establish, Dr. Ambedkar, Kokan Sahitya and Arts Academy.

Further, when she has decided to write an autobiography on ' Dr. Ambedkar's life and Activity', Pawar decided to meet those women who had worked with Mr. Ambedkar in his movement and she could meet them and reunite their memories. They were Laxmibai Kakade, Tayabai Pawar and Chandrika Ramtake.

Once, she has asked her mother about 'motherhood' and she replied in one word 'sacrifice' with intense pain on her face,

“ I just wanted to know how she would express the feelings behind the word ‘ Mother’. My question made her wince with pain. She said, to be a mother is to commit sati, to immolate oneself: nothing less!”¹⁸

She has published her first storybook 'sixth finger' and Jagdish More has published it through 'Samvadini Publication'. In the publication function Shri Sushilkumar Shinde, Arun Sadhu, Shri Nerurkar, Chhaya Datar and Shri Bhalchandra Mungekar were remained present. However, at home front her position was not comfortable as Harischandra constantly felt underestimated himself compared to Urmils' asuccess. She narrates this agony like this,

“His attitude towards me was full of contradictions. On the one hand, he was proud of my writing, he admitted to his friends and relatives. However, on the other, he immensely resented my being recognized as a writer, my speaking in public programmes and my emerging as a figure in the public domain.”¹⁹

When she refers to her Autobiography writing, she constantly remembers her mother and her attempts to weave the basket. Urmila looked upon her writing as an escape to forget the pain of lost son and so there was no connectivity of analysis of her writing but to forget the sad incident and involve her in write-ups. . Shri Sushilkumar Shinde remarks,

“But she has lost one son but got another it means she could establish herself as a writer.”²⁰

Matrini was launched to highlight the issues of women in 1991. This magazine was about to publish the articles and interviews of feminist writers and women. The first issue was on 'Mother.' This magazine is to be edited by Vijaya Khadpekar who has interviewed her daughter. She was free to ask all kinds of queries, Pawar also introspects about her past and realized from the interview that how much children had suffered due to her job as a writer. She could gain fame and name but children lost their mother's affection when they really required.

She has also narrated the incident of her daughter Malvika's interview taken by Vijya Khadpekar for 'A Woman's Voice' magazine. Malvika in her interview talked very assertively and informed that with growing education her mother has changed drastically and she has concentrated more on 'Woman's Lib' movement and she has started neglecting us and the household work. The family conflict also increased due to her higher education. Ultimately, she spoke the bitter truth. Her mother, that if she could have avoided education for herself, if world is better for the family.

Before joining 'Matrini' club Urmila was aware, only about her womanhood and that also she was able to see the issues through the patriarchal eyes. She strongly believes that a woman is also just a human being like man and all rights available to man should be available to her. Number of such queries were in her mind. Her increasing association with such women gave her new insight and she became very bold enough to face realistic problems. She could realize the need of support system. It should be created for weaker class and those suffering women and to provide them some relief.

She has narrated number of incidents of wife beating in the slum area opposite to her house and that has given her conscience deep and impact making appeal to help such helpless women for their better life and to provide them some relief. As Urmila strongly felt that Women's issues did not have any place on the agenda of Dalit Movement and the Women's movement. Both these organizations were indifferent to the issues faced by women. Fortunately, during those days Dr. Pramila Sampat the young president of 'Vikas Wanchit Dalit Mahila Sanghatana,' where she emphatically argued that 25 Dec. was the true liberation day for Indian women. 'She said,

“The Manu Smriti has imposed many restrictions on women and built the caste system. That is why Babasaheb said that the woman is a gateway of the caste system. It was on 25 Dec. that Babasaheb had burned Manu Smriti to liberate Indian women from the

clutches of Manuwadi culture. Our organisation has been observing 25 December as the Indian women's day of liberation for the last three years''²¹

Sometimes, she felt that 'Women's liberation Movement', women workers were not wearing Mangalsutra then, why she should put on. This type of question, occupy her mind and she has put her revolutionary idea in practice. However, she has taken care in routine household works nurturing children and justifying her job responsibility. However, her inner soul was under the constant influence of Ambedkar Movement, Dalit literature, Women's lib, and literature written by women. In this mental moment at home, front she felt that Harischandra expects her as typical Konkani wife. Her language suggests this. The following piece shows this artisanship,

"I was often exposed to the lashes off the sharp and caustic tongue. Suppose someone casually inquired, just for the sake of small talk, if one had had one's meals. The answer could never be a simple yes or no .It would be 'Hmmm!' 'I am waiting for an invitation from you to lunch. The Konkani husband who will give a straight answer to his wife is yet to be born.'"²²

She has also mentioned conflicting situation of her life that being a Dalit woman she was attracted with Dalit movement and as a woman she was supporting women's lib, but her observation is very clear that woman's lib has never considered or promoted Dalit movement or problems of Dalit women. She narrates her pain when in a conference one of the participants has ignored the role of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's 'Hindu Code bill of working Woman's Rights.'

Urmila Pawar has also depicted a very pathetic incident of her life when she lost her son in young age. Her office colleague started fighting with her instead of giving her consolation and condolence on the sad demise of her son. It was a coincident that her friend's daughter was a friend to Urmils'a son. Being her friend she was envy and suspicious

about Urmila's behavior. She was cursing her, ignoring the pain, and suffering of a mother. This incident also indicates that being educated, women sometimes failed to understand the problems of their counterparts and misbehave at a time when they are required to sympathies with each other.

Pawar also accepts the harsh reality of household work done by the husband in the presence of the guests, whether with understanding or just for the sake of pretention. It was difficult for her to judge her husband's intentions,

“Once both of us were at a function.Mr. Pawar had been was very reluctant to attend it and I had literally dragged him there. When it was time for drinking session, he got up to go .A sensitive artist sitting there asked him, why you are leaving. OH yes, Mr. Pawar answered easily we have to leave. This is the time we get water in the house.so I have to go fill it up.”²³

After some days, that artist was narrating the story to someone,

“The poor husband was going to store water at home and this shameless woman was laughing .How easily men appeared poor and women shameless.”²⁴

At the end of her memoir she concludes with pathetic ritual of death ceremony in Maharashtra, where a widow has to break her 'Mangalsutra' and her bangles and with the left toe of the husband she has to remove her wifehood i.e. kumkum tilak. Urmila opposed this ritual and for Prof. Ramakant Jadhav could pass the resolution of Buddha Panchayatan on 14 April 2002 about removal and breaking of Mangalsutra by the widow. She sums up with the question of her own 'Aaydan' but this is a harsh reality of life if someone accepts or not.

In the words of Sonali Rode,

*"Urmila Pawar's Aaydan describes her long journey from Kokan to Mumbai bringing the struggle of three generations for a Dalit modernity about which readers have hitherto heard so little."*²⁵

Urmila Pawar reflects on her use of the category 'Dalit', arguing that it is a radical, rational-humanistic category developed in the rebellion of those oppressed and humiliated by the social system. She sees her consciousness of becoming a modern individual emerging from the Phule –ambedkarite movement and granting individuality to both men and women from the women's movement in Maharashtra Sharmila Rege in her afterword writes,

*"Memoirs of humiliation and resistance delineate the reproduction of caste as a form of modern inequality both in the village and the city. people would first purify the Aaydan, the basket, woven by dalits by sprinkling water on it .At school, teachers would pick on dalit girls to clean the dung on the school verandah when it was the turn of their class to undertake the cleaning."*²⁶

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

In the concluding paragraphs of her Memoir Urmila Pawar writes,

*"Life has taught me many things, showed me so such. It has also lashed it me till I bled, I don't know how much longer I am going to live, nor do I know in what form life is going to confront me let it came in any form; I am ready to face it stoically. This is what my life has taught me. This is my life and that is me."*²⁷

In this frank and intimate memoir, Pawar not only shares her tireless effort to surmount hideous personal tragedy but also conveys excitement of an awakening

consciousness during a time of preferred political and social change. There are memories of Dananjay Keer's biography of Dr. Ambedkar and the Buddha and His Dhamma written by Babasaheb and the process of putting together thoughts for speeches.

Urmila Pawar's use of earthly language is no longer a new stylistic device. Both in Dalit autobiography and Dalit poetry, Dalit poets have used the vocabulary of the Mahars and the Manga to delineate world of foreign experience of most readers of literature. Pawar is aware that there is not much shock value left of this vocabulary. But she gives us a taste of the women's cursing, the words they used in quarrel, open discussion of bodily functions and of the 'polluting' work that the untouchables are for the raunchy language, the openness is also an integral part of Dalit culture. The women sort especially those composed after the comparison to Buddhism; carry the touch of the soil. Her account of her romance with Harishchandra, the man she eventually married, does not shy away from discussing the physical aspects of their relation.

Maya Pandit's translation succeeds for a great extent in conveying the flavor of this speech and to earth humor of Pawar's writing style she retains the use of Marathi kinship terms that are part of family relationships and gives us a glossary to their meaning. It is always challenging to linguistically diverse text from one language to another and here it has been done with considerably.

Pawar's autobiography has been much acclaimed in Marathi literary circles. It has won prizes currently in its third edition. However, she has been criticized for her association with upper-class woman's group and open exposition of Dalit Patriarchy.

The movement for the emancipation of the untouchables carried on her sometime after Ambedkar but the co-operation of many of its leaders blunted its edge even today, cultural and political movements teachers organizing against caste involve Ambedkar and Phule, Urmila Pawar talks about this several times chapters of the memoir that today's Dalit leaders are not very open to women raising issues of gender. In fact, the radical face of the Dalit movement eroding, even earlier also. In any case, Urmila Pawar is today a quite deeply involved in a political attempt by Dalit women organizations to bring together the movement against gender and caste inequality.

If one wishes to understand the complex interweaving of caste and patriarchy and how it affects not only of Dalit women but also of men and women of all castes living in contemporary India. Here in this memoir she has reflected the politics of culture is played out of ordinary women and men in a situational context vastly different from her own.

Reviewing Pawar's *Aaydan* Nilanjana Bhattacharya writes,

*“Maya Pandit’s English translation of Baby Kamble’s Jina Amucha, (1982) and Urmila Pawar’s Aaydan, (2003) locating the establishment of a Dalit feminist stand point within the canon of feminism.”*²⁸

The similarities between *The Prisons* and *The Weave* are that they are both self – narratives of two women accentuating contemporary caste and gender struggles in India. Pawar has focused on her own life story situating it in the context of the Mahar community of Maharashtra and their struggle during the post Phule Ambedkarite period.

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

*“What the writer writes about is social reality, and not his her individual life.”*²⁹

Sharmila Rege suggests that the *Weave* should be not read as a feminist or dalit autobiography rather as, 'historical narrative of experience'. She has worked with Meenakshi Moon to compile interviews of women who participated in the Ambedkar movement. In the *Weave*, she talks about her own experiences as Dalit woman, Dalit writer and Dalit feminist activist locating herself within the large socio-political backdrop.

The *Weave* of memories thus documents a detailed narrative of how dalit men, women and children encountered modernity- the school, the city, the conjugal family, the bureaucracy, activism, literary societies, remuneration of a feudal religion- bringing in to focus new times and spaces.

7.4 CONCLUSION:

Activist and award winning writer Urmila Pawar recounts three generations of dalit women who struggled to overcome the burden of their caste. Dalits or untouchables make up India's poorest class. They are forbidden from performing anything but the most undesirable and unsanitary duties. Dalits were believed to be racially inferior and polluted by nature and were therefore forced to live in isolated communities.

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

REFERNCE

1. Pawar Urmila Aaydan tran.by Dr. Maya Pandit as The weave of my life: a Dalit Woman's Memoir, pub.Katha, 2007 p 1
2. ibid p 91
3. ibid p 93
4. ibid p 100
5. ibid p 111
6. ibid p 117
7. ibid p 107
8. ibid p 110
9. ibid p116
10. ibid p160
11. ibid p 125
12. ibid p 136
13. ibid p 183
14. ibid p208
15. ibid p 149
16. ibid 229
17. ibid p 289
18. ibid p 298
19. ibid p 246
20. ibid p
21. ibid p 262
22. ibid p 198
23. ibid p 307
24. ibid p 307
25. ibid p Rode Sonali, International Research Journal, vol, 3 and4, 2008
26. ibid p 336
27. ibid p 320
28. Neelanjana Bhattacharya, A comparative study of Baby Kamble's Prisons they Broke, and The Weave of my life both trans. by Maya Pandit, 2010
29. ibid p342