Chapter-I

A Study of Selected Autobiographies in Dalit Literature

1.1 Introduction: Dalit literature

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

In many ways it is a protest literature which faithfully mirrors the realities of the Dalit situation and becomes an important weapon to strengthen the Dalit movement. Chokhamela, Bhakti poet of Maharashtra knew the first Dalit writer of Dalit literature. The origin of Dalit literature in the contemporary usage of the term is largely written and published in regional Indian languages in nineteenth
century. In the modern era because of Mahatma Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Dalit literature got impetus in Maharashtra and Ambedkarist thought is still the lifeblood of much Dalit literature.

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

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

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

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

In the 20th century the term Dalit literature came into existence in 1958 when the first conference of Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha (Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society) was held at Mumbai a movement driven by thinkers like Jyotiba Phule and Dr.B.R. Ambedkar pioneer of Dalit writings in Marathi was
Baburao Bagul (1930 to 2008). His first collection of stories *Jevha Mi Jat Chorali* (When I had Concealed My Caste) was published in 1963 created a thrash in Marathi literature with its fervent portrayal of a rough society and brought in new energy to Dalit literature. Today it is seen by many critics as the epic of the Dalits and was later made into a film by actor-director Vinay Apte. Gradually with other writers like Namdeo Dhasal these Dalit writings paved way for strengthening Dalit.

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

Nowadays ‘Dalit’ is actually used by most of the Maharashtra former untouchable as a comprehensive revolutionary category specifically designating those social sector of Indian society which are culturally, socially and physically self conscious by dominant and obedient sections called untouchability. For radical *dalit* thinkers (for instance Baburao Bagul major ideological of the *Dalit Panther Manifesto of Dalit Panther*, 1972) the category is constructed and extended as to carry the history of the revolutionary struggles of all *dalit* people and has the ontological ability to define itself with all the lower castes tribal people and women. The term represents those who have been broken and ground down by those above them in a deliberate manner. When Eleanor Zelliot with most *Dalit* literary figures defines *Dalit* in a very specific sense that involves only the caste and religious dimensions of *Dalit* exploitation other scholars would preferably seek to understand the category in a broader way which allows for instance to...
include converted untouchables and others. The term *dalit* is in such a wider sense which applies by priority but not exclusively to the untouchable castes. A study of *dalit* autobiographies seems to carry a noteworthy contribution to answer the question within an anthropological and sociological outline.

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

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

It is since the sixties the word *dalit* became an unstable slogan for social, cultural and political revolutionary movements launched by untouchables especially the *Mahars* in such expressions as *Dalit* literature (Anand 1992, Dangle 1992, Lanjewar 1995, Gros 1996, Bhoite 1977) and ‘*Dalit* movement’ (Jogdand 1991, Gopinath 1994, Kshirsagar 1994, Pendse 1994). The use of the word in fact tends to be appropriated for the castes traditionally discriminated as untouchable and refers to their specific conditions of cultural indignity and social subordinate. This control is regularly denounced as an illegal political discursive event. But the word openly is commonly used or suspected to be used with this restrictive meaning by the supporters as well as the critics and opponents of the *Dalit* liberation movement in India.
It is essential for a right understanding of the Dalit autobiographies to keep in mind general past surroundings. Dalit autobiographies are literary forms of social protest practices. The critique is used to evaluate Dalit literature as being one dimensional namely negatively focusing on revolt only. It is nevertheless obviously a literature especially the first poetry which often pours forth revolt and discharges a burden of hatred and contempt accumulated since centuries or even sometimes hurls abuses at and spits out back on high castes the poison that they had for ages. But that suspected disapproval is actually a form of bold genuine and strongly positive assertion. Reserved and ruined human beings break the status of animal servility to which they were reduced by a shout of complaint which sign the origin of a human being. The unique motivation remains a strong support to lift up one's voice and denounce as loudly as possible breaking for ever a silence for centuries.

1.2 Survey of Research

Dalit literature is the main forum. It is the medium of expression of the experiences of the communities which is exploited and humiliated for ages in India. Dalit literature is studied mostly in regional languages. The origin of Dalit literature in the contemporary usage of the term which is largely written and published in regional Indian language is in the late nineteenth century. Some of the most prominent writers of Dalit literature which is translated in English they are as follows, Laxman Gaikwad, Bama (Karukku and Sangati), Dr. Narendra Jadhav (Untouchables: My Family’s Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India), Dr. Sharankumar Limbale (The Outcaste: Akkarmashi), Joseph Macwan (The Stepchild), Om Prakash Valmiki (Joothan: A Dalit’s Life), Baby Kamble (Our Existence) and Imayam (Beats of Burden). Namdeo Dhasal, Lakshman Mane, Abhimani, Poomani, Marku, Mangal Rathod, Neerave Patel, Perumal Murugan, Palamalai, Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Sachi Rautray, Kumud Pawde, Rabi Singh, Basudev Sunai, Sudhakar, D. Gopi, T.K.C. Vaduthala (T.K.C. Vaduthalayude Kathakal) and Narayan (Kocharayathi). Some Dalit critics like Limbale argue that Dalit literature is the exclusive strong point of
writers who are by birth Dalits and that upper caste writers like Mahasweta Devi (Breast stories), Sara Joseph (Thaikulam), Kumaran Asan (Chandalabhi-kshuki), Mulkraj Anand (Untouchable) and Premchand (Kafan) Though they are not Dalits they have portrayed the problems and sufferings of Dalits. No one can live without an ethnicity. Everyone and every sub group has a background of its own, similar and common in many respects with the proximate people. That is the social reality which is seen all over the world. Dalit and Hindus in this Country are two such groups living in proximate places all over the Country for nearly three millenniums, but still are different, looking diametrically in different directions in many respect, opposed, aggressive and cannot digest or accept the presence of each other, even though social necessities. Therefore, the researcher has focused on new concepts like subjugation, harsh Voices, Feminist Approach struggle of dalit women, self assertion and condition of dalits for survival. The autobiographical study analyzed with special reference to Dr. Sharankumar Limbale’s The Outcaste, Urmila Pawar’s The Weave of My Life, Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s Untouchables, Daya Pawar’s Baluta and Shانتabai Kambale’s Mazya Jalmachi Chittarkatha. The present research work is to focus on different perspectives and aspects of selected Dalit autobiographies.

1.3 Significance of Research

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

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

“The span of my autobiography is my childhood. I won’t write about my pain and pangs. I won’t write about the suffering of my community. So I cannot give importance to my personal life. I am
writing for social cause. My autobiography is a statement of my war against injustice.”

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

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

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

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

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

1.5 Hypothesis

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

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

1.6 Research Methodology

The methods used for the present research are:

- Descriptive Method
- Referential Method
1.7 Research Structure

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

1.8 Purpose of Research

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

1.9 Statement of the Problem

“A STUDY OF SELECTED AUTOBIOGRAPHIES IN DALIT LITERATURE”

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

Brief Biographical Details of authors

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

1.11. The Outcaste: Akkarmashi

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

The dominating theme throughout the book is that Dalits constant battle with hunger. Although Limbale was permitted the opportunity of going to school he had to watch the higher caste children ate lavish meals and could only hope that they would be generous with their leftovers. When he eat greedily those morsels his mother shouted at him when he got home for being so selfish and not saving any for her other member. His grandmother would eat bhakari made from the lump she had dug out a quantity of dung so that her grandchildren would have
what little good flour she had left. She made hardly credible sacrifices for all but her house still went starving until they were able to beg on a market day or until a good friend received the contract to remove a dead animal. As a child Limbale definitely believed that hunger controlled men and if there had been no hunger there would have been no trouble and no war.

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

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

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

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

“My first breath must have threatened the morality of the world. With my first cry, milk must have splashed from the breast of every Kunti. Why did my mother say yes to the rape which
brought me into the world? Why did she put up with the fruit of this illegitimate intercourse for nine months and nine days and allow me to grow in the foetus? Why did she allow this bitter embryo to grow? How many eyes must have humiliated her because they considered her a whore? Did anyone distribute sweets to celebrate my birth? Did anyone admire me affectionately? Did anyone?" 5

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

1.11.1 The Outcaste: Summary

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

Masamai his mother treated Sharankumar as her stepson whenever she beat him his grandmother saved him, that’s why he had more attachment with his grandmother Santamai. Once Masamai quarreled violently with Santamai from that Santamai left Mahardwada and started living at bus stand with Sharankumar and dada. They lived openly behind the bus stand. They ate and lived in the open space. Dada was a porter. Santamai was a sweeper in the village. In those days three of them tried and worked hard to fill stomach but that were in vain.
Limbale describes the life a man who suffered not only through this caste system but also through the pain of not even being allowed into the caste system he was an outcaste below everyone. The one thing that prohibited his life from the hunger he knew that a man was no bigger than his own hunger and that there was no escape from it. Not only has he suffered from his deep greedy hunger his entire life but he lived under the curse of not having pure blood. Because his mother had out of marriage with the chief of the village nowhere and nobody would accept him. At the end he found his relief in Buddhism. His entire life he had watched religion people and families apart.

1.11.2 Family Background

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

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

Sharankumar was born from her affair with Hanmanta Limbale Patil of Baslegaon. Later he deserted to Masamai after that Masamai had eight girls from Kaka (Yashwantrao Sidramuppa Patil, Hanoor). They were Nagubai, Nirmala,
Vanmala, Sunanda, Pramuta, Shrikant Indira and Sidram kaka was Hindu Lingayat.

1.11.3 Hunger and Poverty

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

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

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

1.11.4 Education

First time Sharan saw lavish and tasty food in the school picnic which was served leftover food to Sharan and his friends by the high caste boys and girls. Whenever teacher visited Sharankumar’s house to take him to the school he use to run away.
His actual school started from third onwards. He was a regular student so his teacher promoted him in the next class. Sharan in his life saw a chair, a blackboard, a cane, and a teacher in the school for the first time. In his school everybody’s place was fixed. Sharan and his friends Parashya and Umbrya were very slacker boys in their school days. After school he went for swimming with his friends. Later he ate roasted meat at home.

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

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

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

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

1.11.5 Marriage

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

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

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1.11.6 Dr. Sharankumar Limbale

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

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

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

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

Aaydan is a general term used for all things made from cane. Translated for the first time in to English as the Weave of my life Urmila’s memoirs describe the long journey from the Konkan to Mumbai, bringing to a realization the struggle of
three generations for dalit modernity about which readers have hitherto heard so little.

*Aaydan!* What does it mean?

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

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

In the concluding paragraphs of her Memoir Urmila Pawar writes,

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

1.12.1 The Weave of My Life: Summary

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

The Weave of My Life represents a significant departure from the path trod by other dalit autobiographies. It is a complex narrative of a gendered individual who looks at the world initially from her location within the caste but also goes on to transcend the caste identity from a feminist perspective. It captures effectively the transition of the Mahar community rooted geographically in the agrarian and rural areas of the Konkan region into a people relocated in urbanized spaces like Mumbai, with a more modern sensibility. The journey demonstrates how the lineages of suffering in the past branch out in myriad different ways in the present as a result of the logic of development, modernity and progress followed in the past Nehruvian era in India taking into account the exploitative allowed to function In rural areas they lived a subhuman existence in Maharwada in Mumbai they had to live in slums on the banks of gutters and nallah where rats chewed on their sweat soaked toes. There was increasing feminization of labor and poverty in the era of neo-liberal policies of the market economy. Poor women in cities got some work in the small scale and ancillary industries or in the home based industries and there was no job security. Sexual violence was always present. They suffered more violence at the hands of dominating castes when there caste riots. On the contrary they had to face the double bind of exploitation as workers and housewives.
Urmila Pawar describes the tough bonding loves of these women both in their husband’s house as well as in their childhood. This book is a multilayered personalized saga of the social transformation of Dalits in India. At one level it is loving tribute from a son to his father at another it gives an intelligent evaluation of the caste system in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generation at yet another level it is reflective of the aspirations of millions of Dalits in India. Like many of the earlier works The Weave of My Life also portrays the conditions of a subhuman existence of an entire community, shamelessly exploited by the upper castes, reduced to a status of beasts of burden extremely marginalized. In Urmila’s autobiography their houses were in the center of the village because it was convenient for the upper caste, or could be attacked from all sides if anything goes wrong. They were supposed to work hard during the preparation of festivals like Holi but they were not entitled to participate in it like the upper caste. If they tried to do so they were beaten up till they bleed. They were made to dispose of dead animals: they were entitled only to leftovers of food even on festive occasions.

1.12.2 Family Background

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

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

1.12.3 Hunger and poverty

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

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

Urmila Pawar was much sensitive about her caste as well as her poverty so during school period onwards her conscious mind was aware of the limitations of person of lower caste and meaning of poverty not described in the books but in reality. The other important reference about the community living and exploitation of the women is seen in their food preparations for them is very evident from the memoir that separate food preparations were done for men and women and
particularly the daughter-in-law was exploited maximum. Urmila Pawar as a feminist and as a dalit woman has highlighted an issue. When the men went out and women and girls remained at home, they dined at kata. A small quantity poured in water and cooked as a soup, with chili powder, salt and a piece of mango or maul. This was called sagar. Women ate their rice with the watery dish. The song we used to sing Hey what is that funny dug noise what is the foul smell spreading all over?

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

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

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

When Urmila Pawar refers to her school life and sharing of lunch boxes experience she had specifically mentioned the items prepared by the upper class students and the variety of items attracted her but considering her economic condition at home she never imagined even to talk about them at home.
Urmila Pawar had contributed a whole chapter on food and eating habits in her autobiography, through which she achieves a number of distinct objectives. Firstly the experience of extreme poverty of living with a persistent lack of adequate nourishment is most effectively conveyed through the child’s viewpoint. The mother is described as stingy fending off her children’s demands while we also see her efforts to make ends meet and to give them what taste and variety she can. Then there is the contrast with young Urmila’s upper-caste schoolmates. The children’s negotiations with each other and the pain the girl feels tells us a great deal about one of the central aspects of caste hierarchy. And finally throughout the hierarchy it is the women who nurture the culture of their caste and there is an enjoyment and a pride in talking about the food characteristic to one’s caste and the food prepared at festivals however meager it may be.

1.12.4 Education

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

1.12.5 Marriage

Urmila Pawar got married when she was in the school. Her mother had rented the side room to earn little money. A family stayed there. Her husband (Harishchandra) was a friend of the man in that family. He was working in the office. He came there to meet his friend, whenever he came there he saw that girl (Urmila) was very sharp and active he liked that. Both of them got acquainted and
that acquaintance turned into intimacy. They got married. Marriage with Harishchandra was her love marriage in that era which was considered as a very bold step.

1.12.6 Urmila Pawar

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

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

Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s Untouchables explores the world he lived and struggled in through the eyes of his family. It is narrated from the perspective of his father and mother, himself and his teenage daughter. It traces the journey of Damu the author’s father from a small village Ozar to Mumbai. Written in the form of a memoir the novel bears testimony to the success of a Dalit family in the course of
a single generation. It is a story of the metamorphosis of Dalits in the context of the social movement guide by Ambedkar.

Arjun Dangle suggests that

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

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

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

His autobiography is a dramatic piece of writing that forces us to acknowledge the inhumanity and prejudices of a social order that treat human beings worse than animals. It is an extended version of Narendra Jadhav’s best selling Marathi novel Amchas Baap Aan Amhi meaning ‘Our Father and Us’ written in 1993. Damu was not born a leader nor become. But he had one exception to rise up against the existing caste system and create his future. An intellectual man with no formal education he worked hard to be acceptable to live with dignity. In his Author’s note Jadhav describes Damu as,
“Damu was not a leader…but he refused to define himself by circumstances and aimed at shaping his own destiny. or, Damu had no formal education …yet he steered his children to educational heights and inculcated in them the spirit of excellence. Or Damu was not a guru…but he taught his children to believe in themselves and retain human dignity.”  

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

Damu is one of the few assertive independent Dalit characters in Indian writing in English. In the opening of Untouchables Damu was doing his yeskar duty (village duties to Mahars) in his native village Ozar. Damu was running in front of the Mamledar senior revenue official announcing his arrival. Afterward Damu was asked to guard the dead body of a woman found floating in the well. He was not allowed to go home to inform his wife and to have his food. He was abused insulted and forced to stay near the well the complete night. The next morning Fauzdar (a police officer) arrived and asked Damu to get into the well to draw the dead body out. Damu refused to do so under the cause that he was not supposed to touch the dead body of an upper caste woman. The author declares the caste system is so deeply fixed that change can at best be ornamental. The caste system was disposed by God and not by mortals. It has such a powerful authorize behind it that no laws no reform movements and no revolutions will ever change it completely. The Fauzdar was beat Damu for disobey his orders. He was inflexible and firm. He decides to leave his village that night he runs away along with his wife Sonu to Mumbai. Together they started walking towards freedom. In Mumbai Damu struggled hard. Jadhav narrates to survive through the Great depression in the 1930s. He worked in the Railways the Port Trust and some textile mills to earn his living in Mumbai. Inspired by Ambedkar’s call for Dalit
liberation Damu participated in Dalit movement. He had actively involved in the Nasik Temple Entry Movement in 1930, at Mahad Satyagraha in 1927, in the Buddhist conversion movement in 1956, Ambedkar’s funeral procession and other activities of the Dalits. He inculcated in his children an ambition to succeed in life through education and hard work. Damu refused to be frightened down by all the odds in his life. He had always confirmed himself as the master of his own motivation. He is offered as a self made man in several ways.

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

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

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

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

1.13.1 Untouchables: Summary

Damodar Jadhav (the author's father) is the outstanding person whose story is told in this book. Facing prejudices in his village he leaves for Bombay in 1930. Through purpose hard work and luck he lifts his family out of poverty. His life is energetic by the ideas of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. Ambedkar may not be as well known to the West as Gandhi and Nehru but is an equally important figure in the story of modern India. His ideas of social justice shaped Indian constitution and continue to shape the national debate to this day. Damu Jadhav faces a rigid social structure in his village where the circumstances of his birth determine his livelihood. The poverty of rural India is heart breaking. But life in the village is not all misery. The Mahar's strong social bonds their love for their gods Khandoba and Mariaai the joy of their weddings is interesting. One scene in particular stands out the Mahar's Buffalo feast. Later in the book Damu decides that his family will leave the Hindu fold and become Buddhists. Sonu (Damu's
wife) is distraught at having to leave her beloved gods Khandoba and Mariaai. Her distress is one of the more moving parts of the book. Life in Bombay is different. In the big city Damu is no longer defined by his caste. He finds profitable work in a series of jobs newspaper seller, railway man and port trust employee.

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

1.13.2 Family Background

Dr. Narendra Jadhav was born in Wadala in Mumbai and spent all his formative years there. His father began living in Wadala in 1938 and all his brothers and sisters were born there. Damodar Runaji Jadhav and Sonubai the parents of Dr. Jadhav had six children Janardhan, Dinesh, Sudhakar, Leela, Trusha and Narendra. Dr. Narendra was the youngest. His eldest brother Janardan was 15 years senior to him. At the time when they were staying at Juna (old) Wadala in the railway colony as his father was attached to the railways. That was a slum area. The buildings were barrack-like. There was a light only in the veranda. There was no bathroom. That convenience was outside. Nine members were lived in a room that was 10 feet by 10 feet. Then they had an opportunity to move to
another colony across the yard which was called Naya (new) Wadala. But at new Wadala there were goondas (scoundrels) and thieves. His father was upwardly mobile. He wanted to improve living conditions. In Naya Wadala there was electricity in the rooms and the bathroom had running water. Damu insisted that would helpful for children and their study. Damu wanted to give education. Even though it was Naya Wadala the living conditions were only marginally better. That was still a slum. The Social-economic cultural life was terrible. Two things stand out of that life one that was survival of the fittest the second thing that stands out is Damu and he was a strict disciplinarian.

1.13.3 Hunger and poverty

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

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

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

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

1.13.5 Marriage

Dr. Narendra Jadhav has married with a Brahmin girl Vasundhara Deshpande on 22nd December 1979. He had done Inter caste love marriage. Firstly Vasundhara’s
parents strongly opposed to this marriage. But latter they met to Dr. Jadhav and fixed the marriage on a condition that marriage will be as per the Brahmin rituals. Dr. Narendra Jadhav and Vasundhara Jadhav had two children son Tanmay & daughter Apoorva.

1.13.6 Dr. Narendra Jadhav

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

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

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

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


Daya Pawar published his autobiography Baluta in 1978. Daya Pawar depicted the story of a low caste child who through hard work obtained education and
became a successful person. Pawar’s writing reflects his active participation in the social, cultural and literary movements on the national level his avid following of foreign literature critical and philosophical thinking, firm attitude, deep understanding and sympathy towards social activities and issues. His work was highly successful. He received some of recognition by way of awards. But due to oppressive circumstances he suffered mentally and physically in his personal life. It is this constant suffering that comes through harshly in his writings. One of his poems gives us a sense for his suffering.

1.14.1 Baluta: Summary

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

Daya Pawar or Dagdu Maruti Pawar is one of those who have most explicitly expressed the feeling of being split. He was known in literary circles as a leading writer of poems before the remarkable success of his autobiography ‘Baluta’ in 1978 made him one of the most renowned dalit writers in Marathi. He dealt with the atrocities experienced by the Dalits under the Indian caste system. ‘Baluta’ recounts the experiences of an untouchable struggling for a peaceful existence mentally but incapable of retaliation in word and action. The strength of this work lies in simple, straightforward to-the-point portrayal and a transparent realistic narration of the culture around him. This brought a critical success in both Marathi and in its Hindi translation and received considerable anti-dalit disadvantage for its frank exposition.’ Baluta’ created ripples in the literary circles and earned him many awards at all levels including one from the ‘Ford
Foundation’. This created a new genre in Marathi literature and many autobiographical books talking about harsh experiences and hard realities were quickly written after ‘Baluta’. Word ‘Baluta’ draws upon the typical mark of the dalit humiliation having to beg for leftover food as Baluta. Baluta historicizes the figure of the stigmatized dalit by locating him within an economy of suffering. Daya Pawar undercuts the invented reality effect of the autobiographical from its origin, characterizing his story as a secret that must not be exposed perhaps because of the shame as well as the pain that attaches to confronting the self for which he writes,

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

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

The great litterateur P. L. Deshpande has said about Baluta,
“The cataract of blind traditions stuck to our eyes that makes us unaware of facts will melt away in the tears that fill our eyes on seeing this horrifying reality will emerge new rays of hope. Reader will then seek to be more human henceforth in life.”

1.14.2 Family Background

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

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

1.14.3 Hunger and poverty

Hunger plays a very vital role in the autobiography. There is physical and psychological hunger in the life of Daya Pawar. The Dalits have to work hard for earning meals. They sell cane baskets in villages which are scattered to them otherwise they have to beg in the villages and Daya was no exception. He too had to beg in the village. Mother had brought lots of bhakari. Three of these were given by the village chief’s wife. The people had also given her the leftovers. Daya Pawar’s father was a labor in the mill. His job was to burn the wastages. He continuously sat in front of a bhatti. Many times he had stolen the pots from the mill and gave to Daya for sell. Daya’s parents were illiterate. His mother had
also done hard work throughout her life for the bread. She went with other women in the market to collect the papers and sold them. She worked in the boarding school also. Many times they hadn’t got anything for eating because his father had lots of bad habits like playing cards, (jugar) drinking, went at a prostitute etc. After his payment firstly he spent big share for his bad habits and came home with empty hand.

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

1.14.4 Education

Daya Pawar’s ‘Baluta’ speaks about various incidents from the life of Dagadu. His autobiography speaks about the continuous efforts of his writers to survive in the unreceptive inhuman social circumstances. While dealing with the ups and downs in the lives of Dalits they throw a flood light on the importance of education in human life in general and in the life of Dagadu. Dagadu putting in school was so remarkable because in those days thousands of Dalits children were underprivileged of education due to lack of interest, poverty and unawareness of their parents. In such hostile social circumstances Dagadu had determined to get education and give some meaning to his life. He firmly believed in the power of education in transforming human life. But getting education for Dalits children was not an easy job because of unfavorable social family and economical conditions. Though there were government run schools where Dalits children
could get free education they were forced to work hard to support other expenses of the school. Not only the hostile social conditions deprived Dalit children of their education but there were also their own people who did not want them to be educated. Baluta narrates an incident in which Dagadu’s close relatives advise his mother not to send him to school. Their contention was that instead of sending Dagadu to school if he is made to work it will bring home some money for his widowed mother to support the family unit expenses. Daya Pawar writes:

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

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

After passing Matriculation it was possible for Dagadu to get the job of a teacher. But he opted for higher education. In those days getting higher education was not an easy task for Dalits. Education had instilled self confidence in him. Daya Pawar writes about this change in the attitudes of Dalits. During his schooldays at a tahsil place he had realized the true identity of his personality. He had come to know that there is no need to feel inferior to the upper caste students as he can show his talent in studies and overcome them. He writes:
“I realized my true personality at a school in Tahsil place. We are devoid of any weakness. We have to break free from the bondages of the village. For that we have to get education. After coming into the town it was surprising to know that I can easily overcome the high caste students in studies.” 18

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

1.14.5 Marriage

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

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

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

1.15. Majya Jalmachi Chitarkatha: Shantabai Kamble

Shantabai Kamble’s Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha published as a complete book in 1986 but presented to readers and television audiences in serial form through the early 1980s is considered the first autobiographical narrative by Dalit woman writer. This book included in the University of Mumbai’s syllabus. Shantabai Kamble, the first untouchable women to be appointed as a teacher in the district of Sholapur in 1942 is the most articulate in this regard in “The kaleidoscopic
story of my life” 1986 in Marathi ‘Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha’ literally means a picture story but also indicates a sense of pieces of pictures being put together like a puzzle. When she reaches the end of her narration and caste a distance glance on the memories laid down before her eyes she firmly attests that since the beginning and all along her life schooling alone saved her from hardships. Shantabai Kamble talked in great detail about the position of Dalit women in society and their active participation in the Ambedkarite movement. Elucidating exactly why and how caste is an integral part of Dalit feminism and how women act as active agents in introducing changes within their communities the texts actually show how the Dalit woman emerges as a separate category in the canon of Indian feminisms a category that to a large extent had been masked under superficial concept of Indian women. The influence and contribution of Ambedkar becomes clear in both these texts. Kamble grew up when the Phule Ambedkarite movement was at its peak and she was exposed to it right from her childhood. She provides us a graphic account of what the life of the Mahars used to be like and how it changed due to Babasaheb Ambedkar. The Phule Ambedkarite movement made Kamble more conscious about her caste identity. She learns to question the deprivation that the Dalits have not only endured for ages but also regarded as their destiny. She acknowledges herself as a product of the Ambedkar movement. Kamble struggled to balance their private and public life she had lived in the same social structure of Hindu society in which woman is considered as subordinate to the husband. She was subjected for her husband’s doubts. But her autobiography deals with grandparents, parents and her community people. The tone of the autobiography is egalitarian and it is not influenced by masculinity. The adversity is an equal challenge for wife and husband. Her autobiography deals with these two contradictory approaches for two religions in which the logical rationality, self awareness and struggle for emancipation are important aspects. In short the basic difference between these two autobiographies is that the former finds romance and trill in the conversion whereas the later deals with the utter need of conversion as means of emancipation for each and every type of adversity in the life of downtrodden.
Shantabai also recounts how being Mahar she and her community people were discriminated against by the upper castes.

1.15.1 Family background

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

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

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

1.15.2 Hunger and poverty

Shantabai Kamble saw disgusting poverty in childhood so that she and her siblings had only one dress each which they washed and wore it turned over in rags. As if that was not sufficient she had to undergo enormous torture when her
husband deserted her for another woman and further humiliated her by accusing her of theft. While her autobiography reveals herself it also gives a vivid portrayal of the evils of insult and humiliation born of that the agony of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and superstitions. Mahar caste was the last layer of the society. They don't have right to live as a Human those people live as a slave by God's law. In past Mahar families suffered from immense castism. Basic feature of this society was untouchability which kept aside human from literacy economical and social development. Kamble family suffered from all these stages because of castism. They were underprivileged, illiterate and surpass their life shamefully from many generations. She was from poor family. The social and economical status of her family was very low. She remembers her mother telling them when rainy season started

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

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

1.15.3 Education

Education is the weapon which made her strong and sharp in the life. She strongly believed that the path of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. In India the ritual says to lower caste people ‘Education is not their cup of tea’ so education was prohibited for these people. She was from the same background. In India women can’t take education in those days and Mahar community was far away from education they even can’t think to educate a girl. But Shantabai’s family favors her act her family supports at every step. After education she also joins as a teacher.
She did very well in her studies. She got a stipend of rupees three per month in standard sixth to buy papers, ink, notebooks etc. But when she was in standard seventh a new headmaster named Kadam joined and forced her to leave the school with an explanation that being a girl she would not be able to study in the agricultural school. She had no money to go out of her village to study elsewhere. That was the end of her education. This shows that Dalits in India in general and Dalit women in particular have little choice in planning their career and life. They are restricted.

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

1.15.4 Marriage

Shantabai was educated in her local school till class seven and thereafter the community leaders put pressure on her father to marry her off. The search began for a school master who would marry her and this led her family to start negotiations with her prospective husband, Kamble Master. Najabai Sakharam Babar (renamed Shantabai Krishnaji Kamble after marriage). Her marital family was also depended on the collection of coal. When she was five months pregnant she discovered that Kamble Master had got a second wife by marrying his own cousin. In disgust Shantabai forced Kamble Master to break their marriage in front of the community elders and went back to her father’s house in Mahud. She faced many personal problems during her duties and posting because of her
marriage with Krishnaji Kamble. She remembers that girls did not have the choice to select their life partners. Every decision related to the marriage of the girl was taken by the elder male in the family.

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

1.15.5 Shantabai Krushnaji Kamble

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

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

1.15.6 Summing Up:

In the first chapter researcher has found that the experiences of caste discrimination, economic exploitation, denial of knowledge and gender dominance are common among the Dalits. The personal narratives of the Dalits deal with the problems of caste, class and gender. Therefore the distinction discussed in the introduction between a social status defined by caste and social status defined by profession can be found in the way that Dalits experience their
success. All authors came to realize the depth of division caused by the conflict between Hindus so they chose a separate path for them in what they considered to be the warm embrace of Buddhism. All the writers insist on their courageous efforts to avail of the facilities of education and be able to survive with the modern world.

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