Chapter-III

3.0 Self-designation of Dalits in selected autobiographies

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

There is also a fifth group that is outside of the caste system the people in this class are literally outcasts. Hinduism with a central belief in rebirth has scripture that explains how people are born based on the karma they acquired. The people born into the lowest strata of society often into an existence of grinding poverty and limited opportunities are known by various names including untouchables. Dalits, Harijan (the term Gandhi used) and slum dogs (from the 2008 movie Slumdog Millionaire). The government of India identifies untouchables with scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST). Some forward strides have occurred particularly in urban areas and there has been step up to the lives of Dalits and opportunities existing to them. This is due largely to legal procedures positive action and activism. The Indian
constitutions and an excess of laws exclude discrimination based on caste. Nongovernmental organizations such as the Dalit Freedom Network and Karuna work to provide educational opportunities job training, healthcare and legal illustration for untouchables. Nevertheless the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws has proven challenging as the social stigma against Dalits. Injustice against untouchables is still especially in rural areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The incorporation of a Dalit identity centered on the struggle against caste oppression happens in a number of ways. While people from the Mahar caste were more exposed to the Ambedkarist movement and as a result integrated earlier into this political identity. The definition of the Dalit identity cannot be limited to an Ambedkarist and mahar identity. We believe that being Dalit
above all means refusing the social order of the Brahmin order. There are
diverse ways to be Dalit and there are nuances in positioning and different
social journeys but the common basis is the decision to inscribe the struggle
against domination at the centre of social identity. Dalit cause is a sign of a
very special way of managing the individual challenges posed by the
experience of upward mobility.

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

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

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

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

Here is with the figures of self assertion and protest and the ways of a quest
and construction of an identity of one's own on the part of those who have
been denied a full human dignity and whose consciousness was made forcibly internalize patterns of cultural depreciation and social sub alternate. This is a field of investigation upon which social scientists have ever hardly focused their attention.

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

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

A writer Nanasaheb Jhodge takes as title for his autobiography Pricking Thorn (1982) a word Phanjar which allocate a tree with sharp thorns. “If such a branch carried by the wind lies in one's path and if while walking barefooted one happens to step on it blood will come out the wound would become a painful purulence as if bitten by a scorpion and one would be forced to limp. It is not only that one cannot easily walk with comfort like the one who wears footwear it is that the thorn pricks and remains deep inside and continues to cause pain.”

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

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

Shantabai Kamble the first untouchable woman appointed as a teacher in the Sholapur district in 1942 is the most articulate in this regard in The Story of
**my Life.** When she reaches the end of self narrative and casts a distant glance on the memories laid down before her eyes she firmly attests that since the beginning and all along her life schooling alone saved her from hardship. She recalls,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The mother was a *Mahar* a landless woman agricultural laborer and his father a landlord and village chieftain Patil,
“This is not a life of mine. This slavery is forced on me.”

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

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

One Mahar Machindra Anna told him this public square of the Mahar, takya, does not belong to your father. Your father is in Baslegaon. Why are you staying in Hannur? For many days he did not go to the Mahar public square. He thought, if he go there they will beat and abuse him. He has no right either on pandhari (caste Hindu residential space). Nor hit on takya. His father is not a Mahar. In the Mahar hamlet he is a Mahar untouchable. If he goes to Baslegaon will his father accept him? His father stays in a big mansion. His mother is in a hut. Where will the live and die? Where are his roots? ... Sometimes he used to start and take the way to Baslegaon. But soon afterwards he used to get afraid. They will kill me. When the small one of the sparrow goes out of the nest and is touched by human beings; it has no place again among sparrows. He is like it. If he start and go to Baslegaon, they will
beat him. He used to return back. When he was back, Kaka, Dada, Masamai, everybody used to look at him as a stranger. Kaka used to ask Dada, “Why do you keep Sharan? Whose is he? Drive him out of the house. Dada used to say I have to keep him because of Santamai. [Ibid] He used to feel, “In whose embrace should he go? Who will tell him, you are mine? Mother rejects, father rejects. Why has mother not done abortion? Why has she not killed him when he was born? They call him sore, kadu? Why are children punished for parents' crimes? When he looks at his mother and become angry. But when he look at Masamai and Santamai, he become sensitive. They have sold themselves for somebody's whim. Beyond bread, there is a world also. The bread is in the hands of establishment and our honor is equally in their hands. With one hand, they give us to eat for our hunger. With the other hand, they enjoy our women. He does not bear the sight of Masamai who is caught between those two hands. Sita was released? Who will release his mother? his ancestors were watchmen at the Patil's houses. When Patil was out, ancestors never envisaged of going and enjoying the Patil's wife. On the contrary, they gave their daughters, wives and daughters-in-law in the hands of Patil as victims.

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

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

Hanumanta quarreled. He bowed down at the feet of the teacher but in vain. Because of Bhosle teacher Sharan got a father. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale’s autobiography is more than a mirror. When an individual sits in judgment upon his whole existence, environment and society his biographical testimony
obtains the status of a particular synthetic standpoint that of a subject reading through his private destiny the crossing and interweaving of the social structures and dynamics which run right through him. From this vantage point the particular reaches the status of a universal concrete subject keystone of a social analysis. The autobiography provides fields of mediation between the generality of a structure and the historicity of an individual's practice and cultural innovation the biographical approach becomes a social hermeneutics by focusing on the singular as a centre of social cultural reinterpretation and restructure.

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

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

A Human being ought to keep his mind engaged in some pursuit in order to find joy somewhere and grow shoots of hope. While nourishing these shoots of hope with all the strength of their soul, they surely made them grow. Dalit autobiographies are memories with a motive. They are no mere chronicle for archives of social history. Events are retained selectively i.e. intentionally. The Self is narrative reconstructed in a performance of identification. Each narrative is a remake of life through a travelling back which originates in a decision to break away with the prescribed socio-cultural models of interpretation. This decision originates in a will to henceforth exist for oneself. The alienated self is done away with. The narrative reconstruction is nothing
less than a creative assertion of one's identity. Memory inaugurates a radically different temporality. The active process of reconstruction of oneself is equally a remaking of history (Brunner, 1987: 11-32) to the extent the previously ostracized individual emerges as the subject or foundation of an inverse history. The past is revisited, recomposed, reassessed and recognized in the light that finally shines at the moment of fulfillment. That light reveals takes out the veils that overshadowed the real history. The accomplishment of the end holds the key to a renewed insight into history and shows the way for a genuine re appropriation of one self. In that new light the true appears false and vice versa.

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

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

Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s Untouchables: a Memoir a best seller in the Marathi language as Our Father and Us. Jadhav’s father under the influence of Ambedkar made sure his sons were highly educated and Jadhav himself is now a member of India’s Planning Commission. Humanity, cleanliness, social equality and justice all these principles of identity are the legacy of Ambedkar
Movement to Chhotu Damu’s last son. This legacy helped Chhotu to develop his self through the hard corners in his life. He maintained his self respect whenever he is commented despite coming from a lowly caste government’s son-in-law a different version for the practice of untouchability. His egalitarianism backs up him at Vitthal temple in Pandharpur when he concludes:

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

His self is developed fully when he looks back to the journey from his excellence in Sanskrit at school to the declaration as Best International Student. Even the third generation Apoorva is not tied by religion or background. Her Dalit identity remains an extra terminology for her identity as an Indian. She holds the global civilized viewpoint for the incidents like Gujarat earthquake. Its autobiographical tune appealed the readers. The literature is dealing with social realities of the recent past through the perspectives of the Dalits. The authors are the witnesses of such facts in their autobiographies. These autobiographies are dealing with the changes that took place in the author’s lives due to their conflict to Dr. Ambedkar in reality either or his values. Generally autobiography deals with the continuing assessment of the author’s self but the Dalit autobiographies deal with the community of the protagonist as the self of the author emerges through the community. It stands for We and not for I. Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s autobiography ‘Amacha Baap ani Ahmhi’ is translated as Untouchable and Baby Kamble’s autobiography ‘Jina Amuch’ is translated as ‘The Prisons We Broke’ describe the changed lives of the protagonists due to their participation in Ambedkar Movement. Actually these are not the life narratives of the authors but the lives narrated here include the whole community which participated in the emancipator movement in the 20th century mostly in Maharashtra. The study of these autobiographies in the context of Ambedkar Movement will deal with the inculcation. The realization of Dalit hood is indication in Dr. Jadhav’s autobiography. Damodhar Runjaji
Jadhav, Damu had realized the untouchability in his childhood when he had to quench his thirst. His father pleased his logic with the dispute that being Mahar their touch pollutes the water. Even at village tea shop his identification of Mahar restricted his entry. But at the age of 12 he ate *samosa* in a hotel at *Chowpatty*. And at the Gora Saheb’s house in the city he is treated as human being without any caste prejudiced identity.

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

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

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

The Dalit autobiographies reflect a burning desire for freedom from the control of caste. Dalits experience a sense of disgust from upper castes for no fault. The chance of birth stigmatizes them everlastingly. Even small children know how they are inferior from the upper castes people. Now time has come for the vast majority of India not to feel marginalized anymore. They must enjoy what the constitution has granted them. Time to ask or beg has gone.
Time to feel noble has come. The term is used by Limbale in his text *Towards an Aesthetics* of Dalit Literature, History Controversies and Considerations. Subaltern sections of the society like women religious minorities and the working class. The Dalit Panthers too in their manifesto defined Dalits as members of SC and ST Neo-Buddhist working people landless and poor peasants’ women and all those who are exploited politically economically and in the name of religion. We are educated only because these facilities exist they were like a father. If there were no facilities we had no such education would have been at home grazing cattle and helping our parents. Limbale’s words demonstrate the centrality of the reservation policy for the purpose of socially empowering the Dalits and leading to assimilation with the mainstream society failing which he raises the secessionist demand of our own Dalits. The demand for a separate Dalits is a manifestation of the community understands of us prohibiting from the institutions of the society and a refusal to tolerate its perpetuation. Dalit autobiographies celebrate the community moral thread. There is an important difference in the women’s autobiographical account of their experiences with the larger community and the men’s. Baisantri and Bama’s narration of the role of the community in their personal development is not pure enthusiastic. The dialectic of the individual and the society bias more in favor of the former and women define their prejudice considerably in opposition to the community strength and principles. This detachment of women from the community is most important due to the ideological and structural nature of the society which is overpoweringly patriarchal.

Limbale’s *Outcaste* describes in detail the exploitation of Dalit women by the upper castes and by the Dalits too. As a young unmarried girl Baisantri faces sexual threats from several quarters including much respected leader of the Dalit community who worked with Ambedkar. Limbale states that every village Patil had a Dalit woman as a mistress and that beauty is a curse for the women. He also mentions the survival of the practice of devoting daughters as temple dancers in the Dalit society that sexually exploit women in the name of religion. Interestingly *The Outcaste* among all other autobiographies by men
in this study is most sympathetic to and aware of the problems facing women as a result of gender inequality. This is perhaps so because Limbale as an illegal child violates one of the most sacred values of patriarchy the sexual purity of women. As the mistress of Patil Masamai’s (Limbale’s mother) sexuality transgresses the domestic space and the children born are outcastes. Limbale as a man who challenges patriarchal by the virtue of the very conditions of his birth is ideally situated to expose victimize women. He too has an ambivalent relationship with his community as a man he is allowed to pursue educational and professional career without any excitement on the part of the community yet his illegitimacy disrupts his smooth integration with his society. Limbale has to bear social insult each time the endorsement of the father’s name is required for official purposes. As in Baisantri who had internalized the patriarchal saying of the necessary educational superiority of the husband becomes a victim of this sexist ideology when she marries Devendra Kumar Baisantri despite initial reservations as he happened to be the most qualified Dalit in her knowledge. Her married life was tremendously unhappy as the husband turned out to be a very selfish, self-doubting and sexist man. Limbale’s autobiography ends by reiterating what he has tried to present as the overwhelming experience of his and his community’s life their status as outcastes. Outcaste becomes a metaphor for the frequent kinds of exclusions that disrupt an individual’s harmonious integration with the society and Limbale’s continual omission from the social privileges is powerfully reflected in the name that he gives to his newborn son. He chooses to call his son Anaarya which means lowborn and of mean social figure. Although it is possible to read this gesture as a rebellion against the hegemonic value system by a celebration and assertion of one’s difference yet the name remains a potent symbol of dispossession. The autobiographical quest for identity has come to naught for the protagonist as even the conclusion of his life’s narrative does not give him any answer to the question he has posed innumerable times in the course of the narrative namely if his birth is illegitimate and then what values is he to follow? In addition if values determine one’s identity then what is his identity? Moreover if he has failed to find a valid identity for self then what is the advancement in his subject-hood?
Dalit autobiographies occupy a vital position in the repertoire of Dalit literature. This can partly be attributed to the debate over the agency of representation of the Dalit in media and literature. Dalit autobiographies have an advantage over creative writing and poetry in the scene that one should have lived the life of a Dalit to represent it through the medium of discourse. While there is an authentic fear of the slide of whatever representational power the Dalits have gained over self of the caste establishment by their inclusion. Dalit literature is essentially literature of rebellion and unchallengeable from a promise to a structural transformation of the society. Its irreverence towards the established Hindu beliefs texts and deities is a part of its efforts to present an alternative episteme a system of knowledge and beliefs that had been brutally suppressed and erased from the public memory. The relationship of Dalit literature with the regional literature replicates the conflicted relationship of Dalits with the Indian society. Dalit literature is a part and apart from the establishment. In order to preserve its prejudice it must resist the temptation of endorsing totalizing practices like essentialism and normative identities. It must also guard against the tendency of being insistent on the exclusive authority of a subaltern voice as there are no innate and enduring categories of liminality. Only Dalit literatures are succeed in its vision of revolutionizing society and establishing an equal social and culture position. Dalit identity is that constructs their experiences of upward mobility.

The caste of a Hindu Indian Limbale frequently determines everything about his life including the clothes he wore the person he married and the food he had eaten. Limbale describes the life a man who suffered not only through this caste system but also through the pain of not even being allowed into the caste system he was an outcaste below everyone else. The one thing in his life as a child was hunger he knew that a man was no bigger than hunger and there was no escape from it. Not only did he physically suffer from deep greedy hunger in entire life he lived under the curse of impure blood. Because his mother had out of wedlock with the chief of the village he belonged nowhere and no one would admit him. In the end he found salvation in Buddhism. His entire life he had watched people and families separately and he wanted no part of it.
Another nearly impossible hurdle that the author suffered his entire life was the fact that he had no identity, no home or place. His mother had once married but her husband had left her and taken their two sons. She began inactive with the high caste men of the village. Limbale was born with no identity by mother or father. He could not get guaranteed papers signed for school because he could not have proper identity and they would not accept his grandmother as his guardian because she lived with a Muslim. When at marriage he could not even get married to an outcaste girl because his blood was impure. Ultimately a drunkard who had offered Limbale his daughter would not allow her to leave after the wedding because of Limbale’s background. The clouds of doubt and identity hung over this poor outcaste boy his entire life.

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

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

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

Limbale states

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

Limbale’s words demonstrate the centrality of the reservation policy for the purpose of socially empowering the Dalits and leading to digestion with the mainstream society failing which he raises the secessionist demand of own Dalits. Dalit women have frequently been called thrice Dalits as they are exploited by the forces of caste and gender. Women have to struggle in their families to study and develop a career. Both Baisantri and Bama mention that their parents hesitant to their education as they feared that they would not find suitable educated partners for their highly educated daughters. Education
for men is considered normative while a highly educated wife of a less educated man is seen as oddness. Marriage is considered essential to a woman’s life and Baisantri frequently has to hear tremendously uncharitable and nasty remarks from her neighbors who are well schooled the values of the community about her unmarried status. Bama citing her own experiences writes that,

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

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

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

The Dalit identity does not merely mean identify oneself with the Dalit self but to bring awareness among the fellow Dalits. When a Dalit narrates about himself one does not narrate ones personal history what one narrates is the
history of his community. The Durban conference on racism was an attempt at tracing out the validity of the Dalit identity in the postmodern context. However the mainstream writers and the media belonging to the upper castes were quite indifferent. The mainstream discourse has focused by and larger on the accommodation and segregation of Dalit people into a Hindu world of culture and living a world where Dalit identity is absorbed. The mainstream discourse is focused on the division of the Dalits into Hindus Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale depicts the resonance and interface between the Dalit movements in India.

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

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

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

How are we related to others? Nothing standing differences in the nature of Dalit movements and the meaning of identity there has been a common quest for equality self-dignity and eradication of untouchability. The self esteem and self-
image are the two key aspects of the autobiographies selected for the study Sharankumar Limbale’s *The Outcaste*, Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s *Untouchables*, Daya Pawar’s *Baluta*, Urmila Pawar’s *The Weave of My Life* and Shantabai Kambale’s *Mazya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* These autobiographies depict the lives of the narrators and their people.

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

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

“The umbilical cord between our locality and the village has snapped as if the village torn asunder has thrown us out of it. We had grown up like aliens since our infancy. This sense of alienation increased over the years and to this day my childhood haunts me.” 16
Limbale mentions about the division between the Maharwada and the village, where the Patils and other upper caste people live. Caste discrimination and constant battle with hunger are the major themes of Limbale’s autobiography. The question of identity is equally an integral part of his life story. The impossible hurdle that the author suffered his entire life was.

The original title of Urmila Pawar’s memoir is Aaydan a word from the local dialect spoken in the villages that form the background of her life. Aaydan is the name for the cane baskets that her mother wove to sell for additional income for the family. Translated into English as The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoirs, it takes us from her childhood memories of life in the village, and her mother’s constant struggle to make ends meet through her school and college days in the town of Ratnagiri to her life after her marriage in Mumbai where she encounters a feminist group and later becomes a writer and organizer of Dalit women. The time span it covers is from just after India’s independence in 1947 to the end of the century. But this trajectory is not the essential narrative line in a book whose title is a better metaphor for the writing technique that Urmila Pawar adopts. The lives of different members of her family her husband’s family her neighbors and classmates are woven together in a narrative that gradually reveals different aspects of the everyday life of Dalits the manifold ways in which caste asserts itself and grinds them down. The author’s point of view is also woven from two strands: that of the young girl uncompromisingly witnessing instances of caste injustice patriarchal domination and the daily compulsions of poverty, and of the mature woman looking back on these with the insights she has gained later on in her life. And yet the narrator’s position is neither central nor distanced. The everyday the ordinary a temporality that is not teleological and a language of affect and incomprehension invest caste with certain presentences and immediacy and opens up a space for moral and political appeal to the upper castes. The burden of caste is thus returned to the upper castes. In Urmila Pawar’s writing there is plenty of the ordinary and everyday and a temporality that goes back and forth from her own childhood to episodes in the life of her
mother and her elder brothers and sisters and back. Much has been written of how Dalit autobiographies play down the role of the narrator subject. The sufferings of the Dalit are like those of the black slave in America the sufferings of her community. Not only this because the path to emancipation is also a social project rather than an individual one the Dalit autobiography combines witnessing and experiencing in an act of sharing that gives it a political force. The first Dalit autobiographies written in the Marathi language appeared in the 1970s and women writers soon followed the men. Sharmila Rege’s recent book on what she calls the testimonial of the Dalit woman brings out its unique role in exposing the reality of both caste and gender domination in Indian society.

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

**The Weave of My Life** begins with a detailed description of the harsh landscape of the *Konkan* region on the west coast of India and the relation these Dalit women their own lives harsh and full of toil have with this landscape. The range of the *Sahyadris* runs along the coastline and there is a sheer drop down to the sea. The main crop is rice the poor grow a form of red millet that thrives on the thin soil, but there are also fruits that are native to the region, like several choice species of mangoes, cashews and the red *ratamba* fruit that is dried and used as a flavoring for curries. There are heavy rains during the monsoon, but the water runs down into the sea, and paradoxically it is hard to find enough water for drinking and washing during most of year. The life of village Dalit women’s begins with journey to sell their wares rice bags, firewood, grass in the town market. The women walk in a group
accompanied by their children for how can they leave them behind and who will look after them back in the village? They talk curse and gossip among themselves as they climb the hills, along thorny paths, buffeted by strong winds. Their confused progress as they trace their zigzag route is echoed in their talk and sets the tone for Urmila Pawar’s writing in this memoir of a Dalit woman’s life.

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

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

This is because untouchability the most extreme manifestation of caste in Indian society functions through a prohibition not only of touch and of certain
occupations, but also of the public use of speech it is only the Brahmins who can enunciate sacred texts, but the untouchables are even further silenced by the authority of caste. So for these Dalit women who were also silenced by the authority of patriarchy to make a public use of speech was at the time truly revolutionary. The political scientist Gopal Guru has underlined how Dalit women preserved the emancipator character of the public use of language in the post-independence period when according to him Dalit cultural politics was beginning to lose its edge. During Ambedkar’s lifetime, and also after his death in 1956 the tradition of Ambedkari jalsas did much to mobilize and politically awaken Dalits across Maharashtra. These troupes drew upon the musical traditions of the Mahars, the largest Dalit caste in Maharashtra and also on different forms of religious and folk singing imbuing them with a message of Dalit liberation. However Gopal Guru says,

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

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

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

However he adds that in the post-Ambedkar era women also developed their own cultural forms of protest. Urmila Pawar writes about how after they became Buddhist the women of her village at first found it hard that they could no longer sing the old religious songs but later on the wove their own words into the old tunes talking of their beloved leader affectionately as Baba or Bhim of his first wife Ramabai (Rama-ai), and of his social message. After Ambedkar’s conversion in 1956 shortly before his death Dalits all over the
state followed him in giving up the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses and embraced the Buddhist faith. Urmila Pawar was a young schoolgirl at the time. While thousands of Dalits became Buddhist on the occasion of Ambedkar’s own conversion in Nagpur in eastern Maharashtra in October 1956 this wave of conversion reached her village in the Konkan only after Ambedkar’s death on December 6. Pawar describes the grief expressed by all around her on that day, young and old, women and men weeping uncontrollably, while she was only just beginning to understand what had happened. And she tells us then the conversion happened quite suddenly. Crowds of people from the surrounding villages marched to the grounds of Gogate College in Ratnagiri until it resembled a sea of humanity. We went there too along with Govinda dada and the other villagers. Several instructions were being issued from the loudspeakers hanging overhead. Then came the reverberating sound of Buddham Saranam Gachchami, and we too joined the chanting of the crowd. After the ceremony we went home. Govinda dada and the villagers collected the idols and various pictures of the gods and goddesses adorning our walls which Aaye used to worship every day and threw them into a basket. This was a historic moment in the lives of Dalits in Maharashtra. Throwing away the pictures and idols of Hindu gods and goddesses was significant in two major senses: it meant renouncing the lowly place that was accorded to Dalits in the Hindu caste hierarchy and it also entailed giving up superstition and ritual in favor of a more enlightened view of the world. Buddhism gave the Dalits a new vision of life and identity the possibility of living in a totally new way free of bondage and defeat.

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

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

Pawar’s father also serves as a village priest he has inherited this mantle from an ancestor who directly challenged the authority of the Brahmin. For a Dalit to take on the duties of a village priest for his community was itself part of a tradition of resistance. The Brahmin who usually had a monopoly on the priesthood exacted tribute and profit from every occasion in the villagers lives, from birth, marriage, and death to illness, infertility, or madness. The Dalit priest on the other hand is partly healer partly teacher and counselor. His approach to religion is pragmatic; certain rites have to be carried out as a matter of custom. He is not above using meaningless mantras to lend dignity to his ministrations, as long as this serves to comfort the supplicant who comes to him. The religious practice of the Dalits is thus shorn of the mystification that surrounds the figure of the Brahmin priest his monopoly over the interpretation of the sacred law thinly disguising his economic greed. The Dalit priest’s role is to dispense human wisdom in the context of the everyday.
After their father’s death Urmila’s brother Shahu inherited the priesthood though he was only twelve years old. People made concessions for the small priest and gave him only jobs he could handle. Anecdotes like these in Urmila Pawar’s memoir can be read for their deep insights into caste as it is lived by the Dalits with its small cultures of resistance that help to make the ever present pain of untouchability more bearable. Her own experiences of caste discrimination are narrated with an interweaving of humor or with dry asides of self disapproval. At school the Dalit children are saddled with bothersome tasks on one occasion the master hits Urmila with the unjustified accusation that their family cow has made a mess in the verandah. She runs home crying and is cheered to find that her mother is willing to confront the teacher and demand justice. After her marriage Pawar is subjected to discrimination when she and her husband look for rented accommodations in the town of Ratnagiri they have to vacate two rooms after the landlady discovers their caste. In one place her landlady’s daughter strikes up a friendship and wants to borrow a sari. Urmila generously shows her all her wedding saris but when the girl discovers Urmila’s caste she suddenly lost her voice. Picking up my brocade sari she walked off. Here is the paradox of untouchability that it is fine to borrow a Dalit girl’s sari, but not to have social intercourse with her or drink tea in her house. But Urmila Pawar’s tone in telling us this story is not the incomprehension of the suffering subject of the worst kinds of Dalit oppression and violence rather it is ironic. After all landladies in small towns are notorious for their caste sensitivities and it would not be only Dalits who are likely to undergo this kind of discrimination.

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

One of the special features of Urmila Pawar’s memoirs is her account of patriarchy among the Dalits. She explained the marriage ceremony of her eldest brother. This marriage took place before the Mahars converted to Buddhism but Urmila Pawar’s family had already cut down on the number of rites to be performed. She gives details of the rituals of a *Mahar* wedding which the reader of the Marathi original will easily recognize as being different from those of a traditional Hindu wedding. The all important *saptapadi* or seven circling of the sacred fire by the bride and groom for instance is replaced by arranging seven piles of rice on a wooden plank for the bride to step on. When the rituals are over the traditional games begin. After her account of several games Pawar remarks all these games were basically intended to control the bride and keep her in check. But when they were being played, everybody laughed and had a good time. These were happy occasions in their lives. Later on in the book Pawar gives us more serious examples of patriarchal oppression of women both within the Dalit community and along the lines of caste hierarchy with upper caste men enjoying a license to exploit Dalit women sexually. The temple priest sexually abuses a young girl from the
nomadic Komti community the young Urmila sees her coming out of the inner sanctum in tears and does not understand. Her mother and her elder sister Bhikiakka are more victims of dire poverty than patriarchy but in chapter 5 we have a detailed account of the ill treatment of another sister Manjula at the hands of her in-laws followed by several cases of similar treatment of daughters-in-law. On the other hand Urmila Pawar also tells us of her own experience of affection and friendship from members of her husband’s family. There is a terrible story of a widow who becomes pregnant and is kicked in the stomach by women of the village till she aborts the fetus and later dies. Noting the self morality of the village women who feel that they are upholding the honor of their community is the only comment Pawar offers us with regard to this incident. She does not mention whether the woman in question was a Dalit though that seems unlikely. However the Dalit women of the village certainly participated in the spirit if not the act of punitive violence. On the whole however Dalit widows were not treated with the same degree of exclusion as in the Brahmin community. Although Pawar does not touch on the issue of widow remarriage she gives us a small linguistic essay on the interesting term *randki sooj* which translates as widow’s swelling or widow swelling. Urmila has heard the phrase from her mother who claims that although she is a widow she does not have the *randki sooj*. She asks her elder sister about it and gets the reply ‘You know for some women when their husbands die it is a release from oppression. Then they look a little better fresh so people say they have got the *randki sooj‘. Then she grew grave and said, ‘But let me tell you, I have always been like this somewhat plump even before my husband died.’ This explanation is perhaps an adequate comment on the nature of dalit patriarchy. The earthy phrase more so because the word *raand* means both a widow and a prostitute in Marathi tells us that many a woman is so badly treated by her husband that she blossoms out a little after his death. And yet the freedom to joke about it the common use of such a phrase also signifies that widows are not completely suppressed.

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

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

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

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

The noted Dalit writer Shanta Gohkale has observed as,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If one wishes to understand the complex interweaving of caste and patriarchy and how it affects the lives not only of Dalit women but of men and women of all castes living in contemporary India, Urmila Pawar’s book has much to offer. Sure those non-Indian readers too will find articulations here that they
can resonate with. A careful reader will learn much about how the politics of culture is played out in the lives of ordinary women and men in a situational context vastly different from her own. She may also understand something of the role that Dalit women can play in shaping the politics of the future.

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

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

Urmila Pawar’s The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoirs is a remarkable piece of work to say the least. It has been translated into English by Maya Pandit. Urmila begins her journey from Konkan. Her story is the story of three generations of Dalit family to straight life of modernity. The family comes to Mumbai. It’s observation that Dalits never speak against English language, Western culture etc. because they know what this language has done for them. Western ideas Democracy, equality and liberty came to India via English language and Western influence. Only Dalits know the suffocation of rural site. In Mumbai no one cares as who you are. Urmila honestly talks about what it means to be a modern, sophisticated and liberated. She admits that the outlook, Dalit vote bank political affairs and its dangers. To be a Dalit woman is double slave a slave to caste and patriarchy. For her both the Dalit movement and the feminist movement are equally important. Dark world for a Dalit woman crushed by upper caste and then beaten by men of her own caste it’s an unwelcoming. This autobiography tells us Dalit modernity how each life is different and its world. Urmila’s mother was a single parent. She talks at length about the newly mixture patterns of patriarchy in background. Family domestic violence and patriarchy scheme create new traps for women. It’s a wonderful piece of work definitely admirable more concentration than it has received.
The Dalit autobiography is understood as a genre because it adds to the growth and development of Dalit literature. The personal narratives of the Dalits speak about the daring journey of the entire community in the process of self-assertion, liberty, self-respect and empowerment. And the same journey gives than a unique identity which is nothing but exploring the experiences of a entire people’s history through narratives. Laxman Mane’s Upara (1997), Laxman Gaikwad’s The Branded (1998), Vasanth Moon’s Growing up Untouchable in India (2001), Narendra Jadhav’s Untouchables (2003), Sharan Kumar Limbale’s The Outcaste (2003), Omprakash Valmiki’s Joothan (2003), Joseph Mackwan’s The Stepchild (2004), Arvind Malgathi’s Government Brahmana (2007), and of women writers Bama’s Karukku (2000), Viramma Josiane Racine Jean Luc Racine’s Viramama: Life of a Dalit (1997), Urmila Pawar’s The Weave of My Life (2007) and Baby Kambale’s The Prisons We Broke (2008) are the Dalit autobiographies in which the protagonists trace out the origin of Dalit identity and celebrate the self of their community.

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

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

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

“Before plastic began to be utilized for making different objects of everyday use bamboo were the most common material used to make baskets containers and other things in general utility of the household. Aaydan is a
general word used for all the things made from bamboo; 
awata is another word. Outside the Kokan the job of 
bamboo basket was traditionally being assigned to 
nomadic tribes like Burud community. In the Kokan 
region however it was the Mahar caste which under 
took this task.” 25

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

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

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

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

An Autobiography is as a genre which is rarely practiced by Indians as compared to that of poetry and fiction. It shows the major issues of category, social group and gender in the Indian context. Apart from recording a woman’s finding of assertion of identity it also offers a portrait of the Indian culture including inter-communal relations, clashes, and tolerances. Weaving
happens to be the essential metaphor of the present memoir. Weaving of bamboo baskets the main profession of the protagonist’s mother indicates their low caste and terrible economic poverty. Pawar has referred about death of her father when she was in third standard. Her mother was not visiting any society programmers but doing her work and nurturing children as her ability. In the school days she was only two sets of clothes which she wore alternatively for three or four days. They were washing their clothes weekly once. Urmila was innocent of bad manner spitting around her. Pawar has specially thanks her teacher Diwalker who had taught her good manners and cleanliness. in the fourth standard she got her first scholarship of Rupees 12 (twelve) and for the first time in her life she could see the Ten Rupees note and one rupee two notes the teacher has asked her to buy two new frocks for herself from the money.

Pawar narrates the incident in her memoir like this,

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

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

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

Well, what they cooked was fish water!
Someone has had a bellyful and how!
She wears a short sarees down to the feet now
To hide what trickling down from her butt.” 29

As Urmila mentions,

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

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

“Once I went to attend wedding at my sister-in-law’s place along with two of my nieces. However when we three spout girls set down to eat and begun asking rice repeatedly the cook got angry whose daughters are these anyway? He burst out. They are eating like monsters’ then someone answered they are from our Sushi’s family. Daughters of Arjun master. On hearing this, the host came forward. Oh! Are they? All right all right let them eat as much as they want. Serve them well the cook returned with more rice but being called monster was not easy to digest and we politely declined.” 31
Adgaon was the native place of Urmila Pawar but for her education purpose her family was staying near Ratnagiri. Pawar remembers the school days memory. One day her classmates at school had decided to cook a meal. They had discussed what everyone should bring rice lentils and so on.

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

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

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

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

In the concluding paragraphs of her Memoir Urmila Pawar writes,

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

Pawar although writes almost twenty years after Kamble Both faces similar problems in upholding her individual identity as a woman use for her of lams and the very food she eats are integrated to her Dalit identity. The transition from written to oral form of self-expression in Urmila Pawar’s own life is suggestive step of emancipation of the Dalits. It is interesting that Pawar’s first try to form organization for women in Mumbai is by opening a literary group called *Samvadini*. Untouchability was the tremendous sign of caste in Indian society. Through a prohibition not only of touch and of certain profession but also of the public use is only Brahmin who can utter sacred texts but the untouchables are even additional sided authority. Dalit women who were silenced by the authority of patriarchal make a public use of speech was at the time of revolution. Urmila sees a close association of silent pain between the weave of *Aaydan* and her writing. It was because of that she called her autobiography *Aaydan*. 
Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s autobiography *Untouchables: My Family’s Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India* is a story of the impact of teaching his children that gave them a sense of self respect, self-esteem, identity and consciousness of human rights. He left his native village Ozar in Nasik and came to Mumbai. Once again villages are the lair of castes in India. For a Dalit its very difficult to succeed in a village. Cities give opportunities to Dalits. This change of family from an exploited to a self awakened human is the central part of this book. The father chose to battle the hierarchy of caste and created his own fate. The book describes how the father was cruelly beaten and insulted in the village. It brings the achievement of family to the front. It’s a positive story. It ends in victory. It underlines the significance of empowerment through education. A poor family attains middle class position by the grit of the father’s power and hard work for the children. India is rich with such rare latent.

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

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

The expressions like the one to whom I belong and but they are my people simply that Jadhav always identifies himself with his community. Jadhav states that no matter what he did where he went or what success he achieved he would always be looked upon as a Mahar an untouchable. Jadhav’s
argument is suggestive of the caste identity irrespective of the place position and success. Jadhav writes further:

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

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

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

Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s autobiography is a journey of finding out remedies to trespass the boundaries of caste and gender. Jadhav’s Untouchable represents the struggle of the Dalits against caste discrimination illiteracy and poverty.
Having the weapons of education empowerment and democracy Damu the protagonist and his wife Sonu fought for self assertion and self respect which are denied to them for years. It is not the life story of Damu and Sonu but a story of all the Dalits. Narendra Jadhav’s father Damu was inspired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:

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

Damu educated his wife and children. Damu a young man in his twenties worked as a yeskar. As a yeskar Damu’s duty was to announce the arrival of the officials to the village and taking care of the guests and their horses and watch the dead bodies in the village. Damu announced about the great arrival of the Mamledar. Damu was running as fast as he could in front of the Mamledar’s Tonga heralding his arrival. Out spacing the house he ran until he felt his legs would give way. He ran singing the honor of the Mamledar alerting the villages that respectable person was arriving. Damu had to wait outside the house of Patil until the Mamledar came out of Patil’s home. Damu was tired and hungry by the time the Mamledar left the place and Damu walked home slowly. Scarcely had Damu reached home when a policeman came looking for him. Damu sensed that something had happened. The constable told Damu that a dead body had been found floating in the broken well by the mangroves.
Damu who did not eat anything since morning pleaded with the constable that he would be back in no time after eating something. But the constable lifted his baton as if to strike him,

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

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

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

“What did they care if a Mahar liver or starved or even died? All they were concerned about were the high-born.”
He came cracking his whip having arrogant look. Damu was ordered to fetch hay and water to the Fauzdar’s horse. Moving around the Fauzdar looked into the old well which was out of use for a long time. Thinking of how to pull the dead body out of the well the constable the village Patil and Fauzdar discussed something and the constable ordered Damu finally to pull the body out. But the Fauzdar cracked his whip at Damu. The attitude the constable and the Fauzdar showed towards Damu resulted in self-realization. Unable to tolerate the discrimination Damu stood up and gripped the half-raised whip. As the constables always prove the power of their sticks on Dalits, the two policemen severely punished Damu until he lost senses. Jadhav writes,

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

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

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

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

Untouchables’ is one of the best post colonial autobiographies. Untouchables' is a multilayered personalized saga of the social metamorphosis of Dalits in India. At one level, it is a loving tribute from a son to his father at another level it gives an intelligent appraisal of the caste system.
in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generations. At still another level it is a reflective of the aspirations of millions of Dalits in India.

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

Around 165 million today Dalits are almost three times the population of the UK or France. This large mass of humanity is trying to find self expression denied to them for hundreds of years. In this struggle against caste discrimination illiteracy and poverty their weapons are education, empowerment and democracy. This is a story of such family. The book is a multi layered narration of the under privileged who suffered at the hands of the privileged for centuries. His outcaste is a wonderful narrative which describes how his illiterate parents raised their six children to become successful human beings. Narendra who belongs to Mahar caste was chosen as
the best International Student at Indiana University, USA, where he did his Ph. D in the early 1980.

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

Damodar Runjaji Jadhav and his wife Sonu are the main characters of the autobiography both are the protagonist of the story whose protest against the injustice is a unique one. His father was against the word, “Harijan. If Harjans are the people of God who are the other people the devils? ”

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

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

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

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

Damu never likes that his wife is gossiping with neighborhood women on some unimportant issues like catering, their daughter’s marriages, dowry and imminent festivals. He starts to repeat the teaching to his wife. He always told her to read about the Ambedkar Movement. He encourages Sonu to go to school and do social work like Savitribai. He is of the opinion that both men and women need to be educated. He would begin reading out in his broken way from a book written by Babasaheb for Dalits or a book on some social worker and expect Sonu to repeat every sentence after him. Whenever there is nobody to listen, he would repeat the same to Najuka or to his mother. He vows to give his children the highest possible education as a mission of his
life. Damu accepts the principles of democracy and rationality while taking decision of changing the religion. With the spirit of liberty Sonu argues that their ill-treatment as untouchables at the hands of touchable is a result of their bad deeds in the past lifetime. It is a conflicting matter for her to leave the religion and follow another. But at last she remembers her mother’s words…

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

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

This book is a history of positive search for excellence of a person who spent his childhood in the slums of Mumbai. Dr. Narendra Jadhav remembers the early days. Survival of the fittest was the rule in the slums where I grew up. I was a pretty good fighter so I wanted to be a dada a gangster. He is excellent in his studies and soon outshines leaving everyone spell bound. There is no sigh of deep resentment and use of words depicting hatred for the society. The attitude of Damu is sober though he thinks that “Whatever heights a man might scale his caste is never caste off. It remains an inseparable identity.” Thus it is noticed that Untouchables is an autobiography of Dr. Narendra Jadhav which is a “Story of Change, great Courage, and Progress of hope.” Untouchables are an impressive writing that forces us to accept the cruelty
and injustice of social order that treats humans worse than animals. He knows the word of Dr. Ambedkar. Lost rights are regained by begging but relentless struggle and Goats are used for sacrificial offerings and not lions. Throughout the narrative runs the slogan coined by Dr. Ambedkar “Educate, Unite and Agitate”. He taught his children. Do anything but do best Excellence in that field. The end with the realization that further change is require. The whole has to stop treating Dalits as different. It is up to the present generation the torch lit by the tears and blood of their ancestors.

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

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

Pawar balances his personal pain with the thought that telling these stories is politically significant. Some Dalits feel such stories are like digging compost dump. But if a man does not know his past he will not know which track he will take in future. Dalits who had moved up the economic ranking into the middle-class and who were embarrassed of their past and present were criticisms of Baluta. This class of Dalits has come to be known as Dalit Brahmin. Yet one among them the educationist economist and policy maker Narendra Jadhav has himself authored an autobiography Aamcha Baap Aan Amhi (Our Father and We 1993). As the title indicates the story of how he and his siblings grew up under the influence of Ambedkarite father Damodar
Runjaji Jadhav. In writing this autobiography Dr. Jadhav draws his father’s detailed notes about the events of his life keeping his father’s language. Ten years later he published prolonged version of the book in English incorporating stories related by his mother. This version ends with an interesting appendix written by his 16-year-old daughter Apoorva. Born in Bloomington, Indiana, she has said about her identity, “I am just Apoorva not tied down by religion or caste.” [Ibid]

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

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

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

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

Pawar's Baluta (Ramnagari, Balute) both authors deal with the topic of caste the protagonists being a low-caste barber (Ramnagari) and an untouchable Mahar. Their literary techniques of representing the humiliations suffered by members of low castes however are quite different from one another. Pawar's Baluta is analyzing from the point of view that portrayal of social identity and placing it in the context of subaltern studies. Rainer Lotz compares two well-known novels which are concerned with women who are trapped in unhappy marriages and finally die tragically. In spite of the thematic closeness the novels convey different messages and thereby elucidate basic cultural differences. While Fontana following Flaubert criticizes the social and
educational systems and the moral code of bourgeois society Premchand praises his heroine's adherence to her role and only finds fault with individuals such as Nirmala's husband and her relatives for failing to do their preordained duty. Baluta was the first autobiography to be written by a Dalit. ‘Baluta’ is a term for the system of traditional village duties.

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

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

“Dagdu Maruti Pawar
Who carries as his 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 manifests his words
His desire was that
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No one should be told

I also feel

That we should not reveal this to anyone.” 45

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

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

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

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

Shantabai’s father looked for a schoolmaster husband for her and she was married to Kamble master soon after this. For some time they lived happily together then when Shantabai was five months pregnant her husband was pressured by his maternal relatives into taking his cousin as a second wife. Shantabai was disgusted by this and asked him to give her a sodchitthi or simple formal divorce before he married again. However later she lived with him on and off and bore him three children after several miscarriages. She left for her natal home where her father supported her in her resolve, and, soon after, she obtained a job in a school in a town at some distance. People told her
it would be impossible for her to keep her job as a single woman in a small town but she declared that she was capable of facing any difficulties that came her way. Shantabai tells her story in the non-standard Marathi of the title, with certain flatness and a matter of fact air that contrasts with the colorful. She later attends teachers training college and retires as an education officer in the government a post that carries considerable authority. The tone of the autobiography is egalitarian and it is not influenced by masculinity. The adversity is an equal challenge for wife and husband. Her autobiography deals with these two contradictory approaches for two religions in which the logical rationality self awareness and struggle for emancipation are important aspects.

3.1 Summing Up:

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