CHAPTER - I

Introduction
1.1 Introduction

It is essential to know the social, political, religious and educational background of Indian society to study Dalit Literature. The socio-cultural condition of Indian society was based on Varna system. The Religious scriptures were the base of Varna system in India. The religious texts were the guiding principles for the Indian people. It was incumbent on the people to follow the religious order mentioned in spiritual books. The rules of these books were supposed to be a code of conduct. The oppressed and downtrodden people in India were victimised in the name of God, religion and holy books. The bitter condition of these communities can be seen as:

They lived outside the village and fed on the leftover of the high caste people. Physical contact with the untouchables was said to be ‘polluting’ and worse still, even their shadows were considered defiling. Even as late as the early part of this century, the untouchables and no access to public facilities such as well, river, roads, school, markets etc. (Galanter 15)

The hierarchy of caste was supported by the Hindu laws to exploit the subjugated people in India. The distribution of work was done on the basis of their caste. On one hand the lower classes were deprived of opportunities and rights, and on the other hand the handful of people from upper caste enjoyed every kind of freedom and liberty. Such varied discrimination between the lower and upper classes were done on the basis of their higher and lower caste.

The marginalised people were far away from education and modernisation. It was a monopoly of upper caste to receive education and every opportunity. Indian caste system always supported such unjust social order. The people were categorised as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras according to their status in the society. The status of the community was supported by religious scriptures. The Shudras were the lowest in the hierarchy of caste system. They had to serve the superior Varnas in the caste system of Indian society. It is observed,
The dominant characteristic of all the caste rules was to suppress the Shudras by prohibiting them from all knowledge and status, a process that continued for quite a long time. (Kumar 121).

Such man made caste distinction supported the mainstream society to dominate the millions of lower classes. As a result, the life of these suppressed people had been gone through injustice, atrocities, ignorance, poverty, and exploitation.

The arrival of British was a great blow to the established social order in India. It is rightly said, “The arrival of the British and their establishment as ruler in India severely jolted the social system in India.” (Dangle 236). They opened the door of education for every segment of the society. The British government helped Indian society by providing various facilities to improve communication in distant parts of India. The availability of roads, railways, post, telegraph, printing press, industries brought radical changes in the life of Indian people. Apart from these scientific evolutions, British brought new thinking and democratic ideas. The benefits of British regime were largely grabbed by those who were already on the top of the traditional caste hierarchy. Thus the superiority of higher caste was continued and played a vital role in those days of British government in India.

In the course of time, the social reformers such as Rajaram Mohan Roy, Dayanad Saraswati, Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Vivekanand analysed social conditions of India. They tried to talk about social evils and prevalent unjust social order. The social reformers opposed caste restrictions, early marriages, the purdah system, illiteracy and the practice of untouchability. But the agenda of these social reformers and their movements were to defend religious, idealistic philosophy of Hinduism. During freedom struggle, the leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi also attempted to oppose untouchability and caste discrimination. All these social reformers talked about social inequality and social evils but their main objectives were to update the principles of Hinduism. Arjun Dangle rightly puts,
It cannot be denied that these reformers were intimated by religion-based values and by those who jealously guided these values.” (Dangle 237-238).

There came an essential transformation in every aspect of Indian society with the beginning of Anti-caste Movement initiated by Jotiba Phule in Maharashtra. He put immense efforts to fight against the caste system and untouchability. It is to be noted that “Jotiba Phule saw the caste system as the essence of Hinduism and sought to unmask the culture of oppression that it sustained, the brutal slavery that it sanctified.” (Omvedt x). He recognised that education can create awareness among the people of lower castes. He reacted against the monopoly of upper caste and started a school for children of untouchables in 1858. He established the movement entitled ‘Satyashodak Samaj’ to uplift the lower classes from the domination of established Brahmin culture.

The legacy of this anti-caste movement was continued by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. He contributed to anti-caste movement very significantly. He struggled for equality, social justice, self-respect and freedom for so-called Dalits and down trodden throughout his life. He urged for social liberation, economical emancipation of the oppressed classes. Such revolutionary thoughts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar are not equally found in other social movements. The caste based social order is forcefully challenged first time by him in the history of India.

The attempt of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was to establish equal status in social, economical, religious and political affairs of all the masses of India. He wanted to wipe out all the social, legal and cultural disabilities in the life of downtrodden classes. He fought for the equality, liberty and justice for the oppressed classes. The self-awakened Dalit were inspired and motivated by the legacy and thoughts of Phule, Shahu and Dr. Ambedkar. The educated people of lower classes tasted the fruits of modern education and moved towards the liberation of their own communities. They revolutionised their ideas and struggled for their own identity and self-assertion. The counter culture of
reconstruction was once again continued by Dalit writers in the form of Dalit Literature. They represented the themes of caste oppression, untouchability, poverty, superstition, injustice, exploitation in their writings. The writing was so powerful that it challenged the hegemony of traditional caste system and tried to establish democratic values such as equality, liberty, fraternity and justice.

Radical changes were found in every sector of Indian society after the Post-Independence period. The spirit of nationalism was raised among the people after Independence of India. The feeling of pride was increased in the society. The five-year plans, decentralization of power, public welfare schemes and free education contributed for the progress in the life of downtrodden people of India. The democratic form of government helped in the life of subjugated classes by providing opportunities, and fundamental needs. The people hoped for freedom and felt relief from every kind of social problems. Such joy of freedom and independence has not continued for longer. It was an illusion for the common people. The fruits of Indian Independence were limited for the hand full of upper class people. On the other hand, there were number of common people deprived of such opportunities to get benefit from independence. The problems like poverty, unemployment, population, communal conflicts, corruption, famine etc. are raised with the Independence of India. It was a disappointment to the millions of marginalized people who failed to get their fundamental needs and rights. There were a number of marginalised groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, Nomadas and Criminals who became aware of their status and existence. As a result, they tried to raise their voice for their fundamental rights.

The political Independence of India brought about a sea change in the lives of made-dalits. The made-dalits before Independence were subjugated to the arbitrary social order of Hinduism. The vast majority of the made-dalit could not enjoy social status and dignity as compared to the self-declared Savarnas. The vast majority of the made-dalits were deprived of just human
life. They gained the fundamental rights through the Indian constitution. The political independence and the rule of law provided the made-dalits sufficient scope to nurture their selfhood. The democratic values such as equality, liberty, fraternity and justice, now, have become the guiding principles of the new society. The struggle for justice initiated by Jotirao Phule, Rajshree Shahu Maharaj and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is still continued by the made-dalits at the social and political fronts. The legacy of these social engineers now becomes the driving force of Dalit writing.

The Post-Independence period was influenced by the writings and political activities of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The oppressed groups were enlightened by the revolutionary ideas of Dr. Ambedkar. He became inspiring tower for marginalized groups. The motivated and self-asserted Dalit writers praised the thoughts and actions of the great intellectual leader Dr. Ambedkar. It is rightly discussed,

Dalit Literature, inspired by Dr. Ambedkar’s thought, is defining and redefining the Dalit conditions. His pen is like a sharp axe with which he is cutting the weeds thickly, grown over the centuries in this ancient land. (Waghmare 20).

The awakened group of writers tried to awake the marginalised people for struggle. The youth of this generation expressed their feeling of awareness in their writing.

The first conference of Dalit writers was held on 2 March 1958. In this conference, the social cultural significance of Dalit Literature was recognised. After the departure of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Dalit society gained a new cultural tradition. The educated youth understood the importance of the message given by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar ‘educate agitate and unite.’ The enlightened groups of Dalit society realised their existence and asserted for their freedom and self-identity through their writing. They came to know their status in the society. The established writing ignored the agonies and pain of
marginalised Dalits. Therefore Dalit youth started their protest against unjust social order and established writing. They reflected the suffocation and exploitation of the deprived class through their writing. This revolutionary ideas and thoughts of Dalit writers can be observed in Dalit literature.

Dalit Literature firmly opposes the division of man on the hollow notion of race, religion, gender and caste. It rebels against that culture, society or literature which attempts to degrade the human being. The self-awakened people of lower classes are conscious of humanistic and democratic values. The marginalised group realized their unequal social order and expressed their feeling of revolt and dissatisfaction. The educated people among these different groups narrate their own agonies and suffering through their writings. The literary manifestation by the varied groups among the made-dalit, surfaces profusely in Indian languages after Independence. It is full of varied atrocities and exploitations of the made-dalits.

Anguish and sorrow in a Dalit literary text is not about the individual concern but about his/her community in general. The motive of Dalit writing is not to sing a song of sorrow but to bring about a change in the mind-set of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Dalit discourse tries to raise the consciousness of Dalits and non-Dalits simultaneously. Social educational, political, economical and cultural emancipation of the Dalit are its chief objectives. The literary manifestation by the varied awakened social groups among Dalits in Maharashtra surfaced in the form of Dalit Literature in the second half of the Twentieth Century. It was quite natural that a self-awakened person, first of all, will naturally look at himself/herself.

The world reflected in ancient and modern Marathi literature is romantic and idealistic. The Marathi Literature did not reflect the actual life and struggle of the oppressed people. A review of Indian literary history would show that “The untouchable was absent from Sanskrit and other regional literature as well.” (Limbale 4). The realistic representation of Dalits is also not found. Dalits are presented from a middle class perspective. There is sympathy and
compassion towards Dalits but no image of Dalits with self-pride depicted in established writings of Marathi writers. Certainly, there was the effect of modernisation in Marathi Literature in the course of time. The literary values are changed but the content remained the same. It was revolved around only middle class life. The new Marathi writer instead of portraying a realistic life of Dalits, they gave description of artificial sexuality, and crime. The discrimination is done on the basis of caste while depicting reality in established writings as

The literature of the Hindu is full of caste genealogies in which an attempt is made to give a noble origin to one caste and an ignoble origin to other castes. (Dr. Ambedkar 46).

The revolutionary ideas of Dalit Literature are not reflected in Marathi writing. Consequently, the new literature came into existence with new vision demanding its own identity and social values. Gradually, the monopoly of Marathi Literature is shaken by Dalit literature.

It is obligatory to define the word ‘Dalit’ before understanding Dalit Literature. It is defined that “The term ‘Dalit’ meaning oppressed, broken and downtrodden came into use officially in 1958 at the first conference on Dalit Literature in Marathi.” (www.pulm.fr). There are different opinions about the word ‘Dalit’. The meaning of ‘Dalit’ is helpful to study Dalit Literature in real sense. Generally, ‘Dalit’ is a supposed group of people who were exploited on the basis of their social economical and cultural status. A group of people can be Dalits who were victim of poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and injustice. The oppressed and marginalised group of people are also recognised in the category of ‘Dalit’. Initially, the category of a ‘Dalit’ was depended on their performance and the way of their life. The burden of slavery was commonly imposed upon Dalits in the caste system of India. In the course of time, there was harassment of Dalit people under the dogmas of Hindu religion.
Dalits were deprived of their rights and opportunities. They were frequently denied justice and freedom. The scope of the word ‘Dalit’ is enhanced by the discussion of various writers and thinkers. The category of Dalit is not only recognised on the basis of caste, religion and gender but upon the basis of their socio, economical and religious status. The meaning of ‘Dalit’ is changed in modern time. The word ‘Dalit’ can be a social class which is deprived of human opportunities and democratic values. It is also defined, “The definition of the word Dalit does not mean Buddhists or backward class people but all those that have been exploited.” (Wankhede 29)

Dalits were the people exploited on the basis of social, economical and cultural background. The word Dalit accepts the principles of equality, freedom, fraternity and justice. The self-asserted group can be included in Dalit category. It is a group of people who struggled for their own identity and revolted against established values. The entire powerless and exploited groups can be included in the Dalit. It is also discussed that the word ‘Dalit’ means,

Harijans and neo-Buddhists are not the only Dalits, the term describes all the untouchable communities living outside the boundary of the village, as well as adivasis, landless farm-labourers, workers, the suffering masses and nomadic and criminal tribes. (Limbale 30)

Socially, economically and culturally exploited groups of people can be discussed under the Dalit. Dalit is not a caste but an awakened group in the lower strata of the society. In this regard declared that “Dalit means masses exploited and oppressed economically, socially, culturally in the name of religion and other factors.” (Dangle 265).

All the people of lower class were deprived of dignified life and social status. They reacted against social, economical and cultural injustice of the mainstream society. They rejected man made barriers of caste, religion. Dalit supposed that all the dominant Hindus were responsible for their slavery and dehumanisation. The group of people can be categorized under Dalit those who
believed in humanism and liberalism. Gangadhar Pantawane, a founder editor of ‘Ashmitadarsh’ says about the word ‘Dalit’ as

To me, Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in god, rebirth, soul, holy books, teaching separatism, fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution.” (Pantawane 2-3)

1.2 Dalit Literature

After defining the term ‘Dalit’ one can be helpful to understand Dalit Literature as well. The outcastes, downtrodden and marginalised group of people became aware of their own status and identity with the inspiration of Phule, Shahu and Dr. Ambedkar. The educated and enlightened group of people from lower community produced their own experiences of sorrows and pains through their writing. First time in the history of India the self-awakened group challenged to the established writing of main stream society. The established Marathi literature ignored a huge world of the marginalised Dalits. So the self-asserted writer from Dalit community started to reflect their agony and pain. The world of oppressed and marginalised people has for the first time appeared in the form of Dalit Literature. In the course of time, Dalit Literature played a significant role in the main stream of Marathi Literature.

Dalit Literature challenged the main stream tradition, the aesthetics, the language and the concerned dominant group. Dalit Literature is the literature of oppressed and subjugated class. It is an authentic experience of Dalits, a marginalised group of people. The experiences of exclusion, subjugation, dispossession and oppression are the issues of Dalit Literature. R. G. Jadhav discussed Dalit literature means “Protest against the established unjust social order and rejection of the entire hegemonic tradition done overtly or covertly, was the main thrust of the modern Dalit Literature in initial stages.” (Jadhav 38) Dalit Literature rejected the established values and revolted against unjust
social order. It struggled for human values based on liberty, equality, fraternity and justice.

Dalit Literature reflected the realistic account of their miseries and slavery. Its purpose is to inform slavery of Dalit society and its exploitation. Dalit writer demonstrated the pains and sufferings of the marginalised group. They struggled for their own identity and dignified life. They also revolted against established tradition and religion of Hinduism. It is rightly stated: “Indeed the impetus to challenge the hegemony and validity of Hinduism is part of the very logic of Dalit politics.” (Omvedt 05) Dalit writing discussed the pain of deprived community and asserted for self-identity by challenging hegemony of established social order. They brought into our notice the life they had lived, experienced and seen.

Dalit Literature contributed to Marathi Literature by providing social and moral values through the writings of awakened group from marginalized strata of the society. It reflects an authentic record of subjugation and humiliation of oppressed class in the name of caste, religion and gender. The self-enlightened group from lower class started to write with new Dalit consciousness to challenge hegemony of established Marathi Literature. They want to change the established social, economical and cultural order of the main stream society to live a dignified life. Dalit Literature is a powerful and revolutionary idea which demands human liberation and social transformation of deprived classes such as Dalits, untouchables, women and nomadic tribes.

Dalit Literature discusses classless and casteless social structure. They wanted to stop established social values and structure which are against humanism, liberalism and democratic values. Dalit Literature is closely associated with the concept of freedom, equality and justice. It is a voice of deprived and oppressed class in the caste hierarchy of Indian society. It is not against any group of people but against established government and social system which dominated lower classes for many centuries. A search for identity and self-assertion are the dominant features in Dalit writings. The
following definitions of different scholarly Dalit writers can be helpful to understand the meaning and scope of Dalit Literature.

**Sharankumar Limbale**

“Dalit Literature is that Literature, which is written by one who is a Dalit by birth, which is filled with rebellion and rejection and which gives expression to Dalit Consciousness.” (105)

**Arjun Dangle**

“Dalit Literature is not simply Literature. It is associated with a movement to bring about change. It represents the hopes and ambitions of a new society and new people. It is a movement.” (266)

**Dr. Beena Agrawal**

“Dalit Literature is a manifestation of cultural conflict of the socially, economically and culturally deprived group. It is not a Literature of caste but of a specific consciousness that deprives innocent individuals from their basic rights of self-survival, self-preservation and self-expression.” (03)

**R. G. Jadhav**

“Dalit Literature is a new significant identity of Modern Indian Literature. It is the symbol of distinctive Indian creativity and thus has an easy passage to the corridors of world Literature. It is because Dalit Literature implies the greatest conflict of human values.” (37-38)

**Arjun Dangle**

“Dalit Literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India, its appalling nature and its system of exploitation. In other words Dalit Literature is not a caste but a realisation and is related to the experiences, joys and sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest strata of society.” (256)
Trivedi Darshan

“Dalit Literature is a journey from main stream Literature to marginal literature, from grand narrative to little narrative, from individual identity to group identity, from ideal to real, from vertical literature to spiral literature, from self justification to self affirmation. This is the celebration of differences.” (07)

Baburao Bagul

“The established literature of India is Hindu literature. But it is Dalit literature which has the revolutionary power to accept new science and technology and bring about a total transformation. ‘Dalit’ is the name for revolution; it is revolution incarnate” (289)

The aspect of Dalit Literature is cleared while discussing the definition of Dalit Literature. Dalit Literature is created out of Dalit consciousness which is an essence of Dalit literature. It raised voice against racism, casteism and appealed for democratic values such as equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. It is also the reflection of injustice, atrocities, poverty, slavery, traditionalism, superstition and miracles of Dalit community. There is an attempt to make Dalit free from all kinds of exploitation and humiliation. Dalit Literature struggles for emancipation and liberation of downtrodden classes. It is socialistic, materialistic, objective and human oriented literature. Social, cultural, religious and economical transformation of marginalised community is the main thrust of Dalit Literature. Dalit Literature is not only a literature of protest and rejection but also a literature of reconstruction of old values and tradition. It is a type of Literature which struggles against oppression and exploitation and appeals for socio-economical and cultural justice.

The development of Dalit Literature is an effect of Dalit awakening. The educated and enlightened youth in Dalit community narrated their own world of experience which is full of physical exploitation and mental torture. The oppressed and suppressed world of lower class has for the first time appeared in the form of Dalit Literature. Dalit Literature produced different kinds of
literary forms such as stories and poems. Along with the development in stories and poems, other forms of literature such as novels, dramas and autobiographies are also coming in full swing. The aspects dealt in Dalit Literature are analysed from literary and social point of view. The philosophy of life, Dalit consciousness, source of inspiration and humanistic approach are the essential factors observed in Dalit Literature. The established value of Marathi Literature is replaced by the new thinking and vision of Dalit Literature. The marginalised people in the name of caste, religion and gender have never appeared in the main stream of Indian languages and literatures.

The awakened group in lower class is motivated and inspired by the philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. They possessed a new vision and thinking in their writing. They realised their existence and struggled against injustice and brutality in their society. The self-asserted communities started to collect their authentic records of life and demonstrated their sorrows and agonies. They attacked the hegemony of upper caste by accepting modern democratic values. Dalit writers became aware of their slavery and dehumanization which had been imposed on them since ages. Dalit Literature assessed the aspect of established writing of Marathi Literature.

Dalit writer challenged the hollow concept of Marathi Literature which had dominated lower classes since Vedic culture. The objectivity of Dalit life is artistically depicted in the form of stories, poems, plays and autobiographies. It was the first time in Indian Literature that a protagonist was coming out from the lower classes. Such a drastic change is due to Dalit Literature. There is an opposition to the established caste discrimination. It challenged the social, economical and cultural inequality. Dalit Literature has developed its different forms to depict the issues and problems of lower strata of the society. All known forms of literature such as poetry, novel short stories, critical essays, autobiography and dramas are the medium of Dalit Literature to discuss the various aspects of the down trodden and marginalised community.
1.3 Dalit Memoir

While studying Dalit narrative, it is essential to go through the development of Dalit memoirs. It is played an important role in Dalit Literature. Dalit writers use this popular form of writing to portray their realistic world. They are convenient to depict their subjugated life through this form of narrative. The self-story of Dalit writer is narrated realistically through Dalit narratives. In the course of time, these personal narratives of individual sufferings of Dalit writer occupied a larger part of Dalit literature. Dalit writers felt comfortable to present their suffocated and deplorable condition effectively through Dalit memoirs.

It is observed that a large portion of Dalit Literature is occupied in autobiographical form. The personal narratives of Dalits, tribal and other marginalised have not been taken into consideration purposefully by the main stream writers. Dalit narratives challenged established Marathi writing and its literary evaluation. Dalit memoirs sought to establish a new form of social order based on equality and social justice. Dalit narrative challenged artistic value of established Marathi literature by providing the social value of humanization, liberalization and social transformation.

The autobiographical narratives in Dalit Literature are full of torment and anguish of the marginalised community. The experiences of exploitation and humiliation of Dalits portrayed in Dalit narratives are the far most significant components of Dalit Literature. Dalit narrative enriched the world of Dalit Literature by providing a new account of oppressed class. The world of pain, suffering and torture of lower strata of the society revealed through Dalit narratives is very significant and notable. The socio-cultural transformation of Dalits is documented in the form of Dalit autobiographies.

There are a number of notable Dalit narratives which came into existence and brought to our notice the slavery inflicted upon Dalits, tribal and nomads. The prominent Dalit autobiographies are Shankarrao Kharat’s Taral
Antaral, P. E Sonkamble’s *Athavaniche Pakshi*, Daya Pawar’s *Balut*, Madhav Kondvilkar’s *Mukkam Post Devache Gothane*, Uttam Bandu Tupe’s *Katya Varchi Pote*, Keshav Meshram’s *Hakikat Ani Jatayu*, Rusatm Achalkhamb’s *Gavki*, Sharankumar Libale’s *Akkarmashi*, Laxman Mane’s *Upara*, Laxman Gaikwad’s *Uchalya*, Kishore Kale’s *Kolhatyache Por*, Nanasaheb Zodge’s *Phanjar*, Dadasaheb More’s *Gabal*, Narendra Jadhav’s *Aamcha Bap Ani Aamhi*. Apart from Dalit male autobiographies, there are some Dalit women autobiographies reflected their own world of oppression and humiliation. They are Baby Kamble’s *Jina Aamuch*, Shanstabai Kamble’s *Mazya Janmachi Chittatharak Katha*, Janabai Gire’s *Marankala*, Urmila Pawar’s *Aayadan* and Kumud Pawde’s *Antasphot*. These outstanding Dalit women autobiographies enriched the world of Dalit Literature by providing the real status of marginalized communities.

Dalit consciousness is an essential aspect required for Dalit writer to realise the world of Dalits and lower strata of the society. This consciousness helps us to know the real status of marginalised community. The realistic account of Dalit life is observed with Dalit point of view in real sense. Such point of view is mainly used in Dalit autobiographies. It is rightly noted that only Dalit writer can narrate the agonies and suffering of Dalits and down trodden through their Dalit point of view. This awareness is one of the outstanding features of Dalit autobiography. It is put forward that

A Dalit writer is bound to have a Dalit point of view; but this is not enough for literary artist. It is essential for him to experience a Dalit insight of his own, through it. (Muktibodh 267).

Dalit memoirs are manifestation of social, economical, religious and cultural status of Dalits. It is rightly said on behalf of Dalit writers that Dalit narratives should be analysed from sociological point of view rather literary. It is appealed for a sociological appreciation of Dalit Literature as:
The point is that most Marathi Literature is not parallel to life. On the other hand Dalit Literature looks at reality with open eyes. It views history objectively and from a sociological point of view.” (Dangle 237).

The foundation of Dalit narrative is based on human values. Every day experiences of exploitation, humiliation, deprivation and torture are the issues of Dalit narratives. The humanistic, materialistic, moralistic purposes of Dalit narratives enhance the significance of Dalit literature.

*Balut* (1978) is one of the significant Dalit autobiographies by Daya Pawar which created storm in Dalit Literature. The world of Dalit is narrated by Daya Pawar is the discussion of Dalit community. It is a story of the narrator dealing with social, cultural, economical and educational aspects of Dalit society. The narrator being a Dalit narrated his own pains and agonies by providing realistic account of Dalit community. The narrator opposed caste discrimination based on religion and god. The writer wanted to make his own community to be aware of social status. He wanted Dalit to be free from the slavery of upper caste and their religion. The narrator is motivated by the revolutionary thoughts of DR. B. R. Ambedkar and marched toward liberation of his own community from the domination of main stream society.

*Athwaniche Pakshi* (1979) is followed after *Balut* and published in 1979 by P. E. Sonkamble. It is recognised and got publicity in the world of Dalit Literature. It also becomes a part of discussion and debate in Dalit Literature. It is a realistic account of Dalits in Marathwada in Maharashtra. Sonkamble affirmed that untouchability by birth is a curse on humanity. The caste discrimination in the region of Marathwada was narrated through the present autobiography of Sonkamble. The problem of casteism and untouchability is common aspect of Dalit Literature observed in the present narrative. The narrator stood firmly against established social order and demanded a dignified life to downtrodden Dalit community. He is a representative of his own community to depict social status and has struggled for self-identity and self-assertion.
Mukkam Post: Devache Gothane is an autobiography of Madhav Kondvilkar published in 1979. It is a socio-cultural record of chambhar community. The narrator narrated a struggle of Chambhar community and their search for self-identity. A habit of liquor collapsed the life of Chambhar community is realistically depicted in the present autobiography. The Community is involved in the customs and the traditional rituals. These people frequently faced the problem of hunger, superstition, untouchability and poverty. The narrator observed the bitter condition of Chambhar community due to their ignorance and illiteracy. The strong desire to live in adverse situation is one of the aspects of this community. The narrator is intended to gain property after his completion of education. The characters narrated in this work are subjugated under the problem of hunger, poverty and superstition.

Taral Antaral is also a notable Dalit autobiography written by Shankarao Kharat published in 1981. Basically, the writer is famous for his auto-stories. He was born in Dalit family at Aatpadi in Sangli District. He has revealed the world of Dalit through his own experiences. It is not only the story of him but also the entire Dalit society. Hunger, humiliation, slavery and deprivation in Dalit society is commonly observed in the present work. The sixty years experiences of Shankarro Kharat are noted in the present narrative. The present autobiographical narrative constituted the childhood experiences of the narrator. He got different experiences during his education and profession of lawyer. They were notable account of Shankarrao Kharat. The present narrator is influenced by the revolutionary ideas and thoughts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The present Dalit narrative is a bitter experience of casteism and untouchability. The narrative reflects belief, superstition and exploitation of Dalit community. A journey of a common Dalit boy to Vice-chancellor is an attraction of this memoir narrated by Shankarrao Kharat himself.

‘Katyavarchi Pot’ is also a picture of sorrow and pain of Dalit community. A struggle to complete hunger is a notable incident provided by Uttam Bandu Tupe. Despair, predicament, slavery and dehumanisation of
Dalits are the problems raised in this memoir. The narrator challenged the established Marathi writer who showed their disinterest towards Dalit life and their sufferings. He complained that Marathi writers have not assessed his work properly. Every member of the narrator’s family struggled in poverty and lived a miserable life. The people of this community are deprived of fundamental needs and human rights. The world of Dalits is narrated with full of humiliation and deprivation. The pathetic condition of Dalits is vividly narrated through the present memoir.

Rustam Achalkhamb’s ‘Gavki’ (1983) is one of the important Dalit autobiographies. The harassment of the narrator while getting education is significant incident narrated in the present memoir. The narrator has depicted the experiences at Manegaon in Marathwada region. He has dramatized and projected the details of marriage ceremony, the marriage procession of bridegroom in the village, the festival of ‘Pola’ and the ostracism of the Mahars, an oppressed class. The quarrels between Mahars and Kunbis on the issues of water are recorded in this memoir. The conflicts over the marriage procession of the bride groom, the fight between Mahars and Lamans on the issue of farm ownership are depicted in a realistic manner by Achalkhamb.

Sharankumar Limbale’s Dalit autobiographies such as Akkarmashi, Baramashi, Ranimashi are the popular ones in Dalit Literature. Akkarmashi (1984) is a life story of a disinherited boy born of a sexual exploitation of a dalit woman by a Marathi man. The narrative demonstrated Limbale’s struggle to establish his own identity in the world of poverty, starvation and caste discrimination. Limbale’s life story contains a heap of insult, atrocities and humiliation. Hunger and starvation was the unfailing companion of the entire family of the narrator. The narrator had to live without a piece of bread for days together. Limbale also commented on the superstitions and blind beliefs prevailed in Marathwada. Unending poverty and social segregation dragged these people close to low God and Goddesses. Akkarmashi is a reaction against the culture supported for untouchability and casteism. It has also challenged the
established dominant people who exploited and raped Dalit women frequently. These people of Dalit community struggled for hunger and self-identity is revealed through the present narrative. There is an atmosphere of revolution created against exploitation and subjugation of dominant class over the lower community labelled as Dalits.

Dalit women narratives are also significant in Dalit Literature. Baby Kamble’s narrative entitled ‘Jin Amucha’ (1986) translated by Maya Pandit as *The Prisons We Broke* in 2008. It is said that “Kamble’s book is remarkable for its attempt to portray Mahar Women’s exploitation at the altar of traditions not only by upper caste men but also by their own people.” (Jain 90) It marks a welcome deviation in Dalit autobiographical writings. The present narrative is not about an individual but about different rituals and blind beliefs. A realistic account of subjugation of women is an attraction of this memoir. Baby Kamble did not blame for the treatment she is meted out, but wrote about the subordinate and inhuman treatment given to the entire women in her caste by upper caste and also by her own caste male people. She did not write only about her own agonies, pains, humiliation and exploitation like other Dalit autobiography, but she commented on wrong Indian culture and her own Mahar Community.

The mental and physical torture of Dalit women is frankly discussed by Baby Kamble. It is commented about the present narrative, “Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke* elaborately documents both the mental and physical tortures the Dalit women have to undergo in their day-to-day lives. Such a frank documentation of a community’s life is very rare in the history of autobiographical writing.” (Kumar 260) Ignorance and inherited superstitious belief made these women miserable and pathetic. Baby Kamble realised the status of women in Dalit community. She supposed that women in Dalit community would never get anything worthy without a consistent struggle with established class and their own people. One of the outstanding features of this autobiography is the reflection of confrontation between the tradition and
modernity in Dalits. Baby Kamble referred to the ill-treatment given to them by their parents. She also portrayed women’s fighting against injustice inflicted upon them. The present narrative carries a special attraction not only in Dalit Literature but also in other subaltern narratives. The present attempt of the narrator is not only to depict an account of her personal sufferings and troubles but also to provide caste reality in Dalit Community. Baby Kamble hold both the upper caste and her own caste people responsible for their deplorable condition.

Shantabai Kamble’s autobiographical narrative entitled *Maiya Jalmachi Chitarkatha* (1986) discusses that caste, class and gender discrimination are prevailed in both the upper caste and Dalit families. As a girl child Shantabai was deprived of several opportunities in her life. The present women narrative depicts humiliation and harassment of a girl child of Dalit family in the form of Shantabai Kamble. She is deprived due to her birth in Dalit family and dominated as a female by their male people. Thus she has gone through double slavery of casteism and patriarchy. The struggle of Shantabai Kamble for education has occupied a dominant part in this narrative. Shantabai’s autobiographical extract tells us how difficult it is for a Dalit woman to survive in a hostile Indian caste system.

Urmila Pawar’s autobiographical narrative entitled ‘Aayadan’ translated as ‘The Weave of My Life’ by Maya Pandit. It deals with the characteristic dalit issues like untouchability, deprivation, starvation exploitation, poverty etc. The women portrayed in this memoir are the victims of whims of their men, superstitious ideas, orthodox social customs and difficult natural environment. The women of Dalit community fetched water from distant streams, cooked for the entire family, cleaned houses and yards, earned family livelihood. The community of Dalit presented in this memoir suffered from the social customs and rituals in the region. The entire village excluding Dalit used to celebrate ‘Holi’ with traditional enthusiasm, gaiety and fervour. Birth of a female child supposed a curse in Dalit family. Daughter was thought to be an ominous
burden on the male shoulders of the family. The narrator herself was an 
unwelcome responsibility to her parents she writes:

I was the youngest child in the family. Yet, I was never indulged. In fact I was 
an unwanted child because I was a girl. When I was born, my cousin 
Govindada wanted to throw me on the dung heap. When I grew a little older, 
many would beat me. (Pawar 64)

One more Dalit women writer Kumud Pawde wrote ‘Antasphot’ to 
demonstrate her predicament in Indian caste society. She was deprived the 
learning of Sanskrit during her school and college time. But she broke every 
kind of bondage of slavery and fought against all odds and learned Sanskrit. 
Becoming a distinguished professor of Sanskrit, she proved a Dalit could also 
do better in Sanskrit. The present memoir reminds us how Dalits are less 
fortunate in the Indian society compared to the upper caste people. The journey 
of Kumud Pawde is a search for self-identity and self-dignified life. She 
wanted to learn Sanskrit as one of her favourite subjects but she was 
discouraged by her teachers of upper castes. Despite of all odds, she learned 
Sanskrit and secured good marks. Whenever she appeared for an interview for 
a professor in Sanskrit, she was disregarded and humiliated due to her lower 
caste. The highly qualified people from lower classes are also not given a 
respectable place in the so called established society. So it is needless to think 
about the status of common people in the main stream society.

In the hierarchy of Indian caste system, there are many sub castes and 
tribes. They were supposed untouchables and lived in huts outside the villages. 
The established social order lodged inferior and lower work upon these 
untouchables such as skinning of dead animals, making of shoes, ropes, baskets 
and brooms. All such degrading, inferior works were allotted to them. The jobs 
offered by the dominant class were not respectable. In addition to all these 
castes and sub-castes, there were nomadic and tribal communities. These 
people lived on the outskirts of the village. Even they did not have their own 
hut to stay in and no occupation to perform to feed their children. These people
were deprived of their fundamental needs such as food, shelter and clothes. The helpless condition of nomadic tribe is stated as:

For nomadic and criminal tribes, there is neither a village nor a home; they are here today and elsewhere tomorrow. Begging or stealing is the only alternative available to them for filling their bellies. (Limbale 28)

They moved from one place to another on the back of animals. They satisfied their hunger by eating roots and fruits from the forest. Even they hunted birds and animals to complete their hunger. They sold shells, needles, baskets of canes, beads and strings etc. The communities such as Garudis Pardhis Wadars, Kaikadis, Masangogis and Kolhatis lived very difficult, unstable and insecure life. Poverty was a part and parcel of their life. They were far away from education and civilised culture. Such a marginalised group has not reflected in established Marathi Literature. The educated enlightened groups of these communities are inspired by the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar and Dalit writings. They started to narrate their own suffering and pitiable condition. J. M. Waghmare says,

Dalit Literature has given ample inspiration and insight to the writers emerging from the tribal and nomadic communities. Writers such as Laxman Mane, Laxman Gaikwad, Kishor Shantabai Kale are a new few outstanding example. (Waghmare 22)

The exploitation and deprivation of the nomadic tribes is not being discussed in the world of Marathi Literature. The miserable and sorrowful life of these people was required to be a part of discussion in the modern world. The enlightened writers and people of these oppressed communities are inspired by the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar and started to narrate their own suffering and pitiable condition. The self-asserted people of these subjugated communities realised their social, economical status in the main stream society. They come to know that their existence is not noticed in the so called established Marathi writing. They became aware of their loss and humiliation.
They blamed established social order which was responsible for the degradation and deplorable condition of these nomadic tribes.

They started to depict sorrows, pains, pathetic condition of their own community. The educated youth from the nomadic tribes realised backwardness, savagery and brutality of their people. These oppressed people frustrated and disappointed out of their illiteracy, poverty, hunger, superstition, rituals and unstable life. The educated and self-asserted people from these tribes attempted to solve the problem of unorganised and unstable life of their own tribes. The inspired and motivated youth of these marginalised community demonstrated the agonies and sufferings. Some of the dominant leaders of these communities such as Daulatrao Bhosale, Balkrushna Renke and Laxman Mane organised their own community and struggled for their rights and self-identity. They tried to attract the suppressed world of these nomadic tribes through the weapon of agitation and movements. The effect of such movement of nomadic tribes awakened a number of youth from these deprived tribes. These self-awakened youth started to portray the life of their community through their writings.

The writing of nomadic tribes and their movement accepted the thoughts of Phule, Shahu and Ambedkar. The writing of these youth of nomadic tribes focused on human liberation and human dignity. They moved for self-identity and self-assertion in their way of writing. The writer of nomadic tribes intended to recollect their past agonies and miserable life. It was their target to reveal their marginal world. They became aware of their low, undignified life and reflected it in their writings. They are ready to struggle against their inhuman and miserable condition. They challenged the established unjust social order which created a number of obstacles in life of these nomadic tribes. The aim of these nomadic writers is to bring clearly into notice the world of exploitation and deprivation.

The realistic account of nomadic tribes is vividly narrated in the form of the notable autobiographies of Nomadic Tribes such as Laxman Mane’s Upara
(1978), Dadasaheb More’s *Gabal* (1983), Laxman Gaikwad’s *Uchalya* (1984), Vaijnath Kalase’s *Aairanichya Ghana* (1984), Bhimrao Gasti’s *Berad* (1984), Gulab Waghmare’s *Ranlhiri* (1986), Atmaram Rathod’s *Tanda*, Kacharu Gire’s *Bhatkya* (1991), Kishore kale’s *Kolhatyache Pore*, Janabai Girhe’s *Marankala*, Vimal More’s *Tin Dagdachi Chul* (2000). These autobiographies of nomadic writers are notable in Marathi Dalit Literature. These nomadic autobiographies narrated the graph of sorrows and pains. The writers of these communities were the representative of their own community. These writers narrated their own world of experience realistically. They also dared to reveal the age old habits of their own community. They narrated traditional beliefs, rituals, festivals and *Jatpanchayat*.

All these nomadic writings are the manifestation of social, cultural and educational experiences of these marginalised communities. All these nomadic autobiographies contributed significantly in Marathi Literature. The autobiographies of these tribes are recognised significantly in the world of Marathi Literature. The readers, critiques and thinkers of Marathi Literature accepted these Dalit autobiographies spontaneously due to its appeal for liberalism and social transformation. These autobiographies are also prescribed in the syllabus of University due to its significance and scope

**1.4 Scope of the Study**

A plenty of Dalit Memoirs are written in different Indian Languages by Dalit writers. It has been largely discussed as an important literary genre. Dalit autobiographical form has significantly contributed to Indian literature. The present research study focuses on Laxman Mane’s *An Outsider*, Laxman Gaikwad’s *The Branded* and Kishore Shantabai Kale’s *Against All Odds*. The selected works are analysed from different angles which contributed to Indian society and literature. Translation of Dalit autobiographies from various regional languages into English acquired a national and international importance and created its own world by challenging the established notions.
Dalit literature is discussed from a subaltern point of view, which is the need of the post-colonial discourse.

The selected Dalit memoirs are written by so called peripheral cast writers who are deprived of social, cultural, religious, economical, and political status. Therefore, the topic under study has its relevance in sociology, anthropology, Psychology, Economics, Political Science and literature. The memoirs as a literary genre are specially appeared in Marathi Literature due to its authenticity, confessional tone, note of revolt, protest and an argent plea for cosmopolitan society. The selected memoirs are discussed in different languages and literatures too. It also explores authenticity, regionalism and gender issues. Dalit writing also looks at literature, art, culture, religion and morality from sociological point of view.

1.5 Objectives

The research work aims at bringing out social, cultural, economical and religious perspectives of Dalit community. The study investigates the causes and consequences of degradation and exploitation of Dalit community. It also attempts to surface the problem of poverty, hunger, superstition, deprivation, humiliation, Jatpanchayat and subjugation of women. The study analyses the narratives from sociological point of view to understand the realistic picture of marginal world of Uchalya, Kaikadi and Kolhati community. The study brings into our notice an effort of Narrator towards liberation. The research work attempts to present authenticity and liveliness of Dalit literatures with the help of selected Dalit memoirs. It aims to record micro experience of underprivileged community. The present study attempts to provide human values and democratic principles to the modern society. It aims to liberate and relegate Dalits, criminals and tribes. The study aims to provide an account of social, economical, cultural and religious background of Dalit community. It also attempts to investigate Dalit consciousness in the Dalit memoirs. The present study also tries to observe a sense of revolt and protest in Dalit writer.
The study brings into notice cast consciousness, self-assertion and search for identity.

It also demonstrates subjugation, exploitation, humiliation of deprived community. The present study is distinguished with its principles of humanism, liberalism and modern values which are the hallmark of modern society and nation. The study concentrates to reveal degradation and subjugation of marginalized communities such as Uchalya, Kaikadi and Kolhati community. It is also an effort to realize the world of agony, sorrow, anguish and pathetic condition of downtrodden classes.

1.6 Significance

The world is now being viewed as a global village. People of different faiths, castes and nations can be brought together with the principle of equality. This principle is a dominant feature of Dalit writing. Dalit writing, therefore, can be called a unifying force of the new world.

The works chosen for study though written in the post-independence era, however, their roots are deeply fixed in age-old socio, economic and religious structures of Indian society. The vast majority of Indian population was treated as subhuman; as a result they remained unskilled, uncivilized and unproductive resource of the nation. It is the loss of humanity and loss of the nation in many ways. The study, therefore, has an inseparable social relevance.

The memoirs under study explain socio, economic and religious ethos of Indian society. The study of the memoirs inspires and motivates reader to establish an egalitarian and cosmopolitan human society based on the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. The memoirs are the live experience of Dalit writer and their struggle for existence and graph of success despite all man made barriers. No doubt Dalit Literature contributed in the process of social transformation in the marginal community.
The works under study observe keen resemblances with subaltern literature and, thus, cross the national boundaries. In the wider sense it is related with the subalternity of the marginal world. It also explores authenticity, regionality and gender issues.

1.7 Methodology

The present research work has uses MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (Nicholls, 7th edition) as the basis for its style manual. The entire technical format, references entries are used according to the guidelines of MLA. Analytical, descriptive and comparative methods are followed while interpreting the selected Dalit Memoirs. The proposed work does not require any practical or field work. The texts, the reference books, journals, Magazines and web based material have been referred as primary data and secondary data for the same
Works Cited


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