India is indeed a land of immense controversies and contradictions. This statement is validated with the recurrent evidences of meanness in the treatment to the low caste Dalits in the guise of democratic environment. It is often mentioned that Indian civilization is unique and great in many ways. Its greatness is evidenced with its rich socio-cultural heritage which has spread through Buddhism to countries like China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and through Hinduism spread to Bali, Indonesia, Nepal and Mauritius. Though it is so, it is unfortunate to note that India’s greatness is mired with a heart-stopping history of human humiliation. Its greatness is blemished by the humiliating bolt of casteism which is devoid of humanitarianism.

Indian society is classified in various social groups, commonly known as castes, with a lot of difference in the degree of dignity of each group. There are innumerable restrictions imposed on social interactions of each group in the name of caste. The Indian caste system is an exclusively oppressive system in itself. It has a distinct and at times destructive quality that divides people into high and low caste groups. This system stamps one as a born intelligent individual and stamps another person as a useless and worthless being. Due to this prejudiced and partial caste system, millions of ex-untouchables and the present dalits have lived the cruellest of lives more wretched than animals. In Indian society, animals like cats and dogs are accorded more dignified status than the underprivileged low castes.

This debunking social system has been systematically exploiting a huge stock of humanity in the name of religion or virtue. It made the low castes socially invisible, economically weak and politically handicapped. Due to the caste system, the low castes, the shudras, the pariahs, the untouchables or the present dalits have been neglected and ostracised for centuries from times immortal and even today when the
eradication of caste discrimination is constitutionally guaranteed, the condition has not changed. The low castes have always been put on the periphery and exposed to physical as well as psychological assaults at different phases of history. Even today too, they have to bear the stigma of low caste on their lives. In the present context, though a small number of low caste people, on account of their education, have succeed to get professional freedom, financial stability and a little bit of political support, they are not willingly accepted at any place due to the deep rooted caste bias in the psyche of the high caste people. At public spaces, professional spots and social gatherings, they are slightly tolerated on account of constitutional guarantee but at personal level, most of the times secretly, the low castes are sidelined. It is the caste system which closed every door and window of progress for the low castes. They have been enforced to live a sub-human life and have been made to suffer from low self esteem, low social status and loss of identity.

The caste system is deeply entrenched in Indian society. Even today, it is often observed that Indian people are very keen to know the caste of the person they meet. Caste can easily be identified with certain markers like the surnames commonly found in particular caste such as Kamble, Tayade, Sakpal (Mahar community), Sathe, Jogdand (Matang community), Birhade, Shinde (Chamar community), Gaikwad and Jadhav (Uchalya- Thieving community), Mane (Kaikadi community) and so on. The place of origin, language accent and professional status too indicate the caste status of a person. Though, discrimination based on caste is now a serious crime, it is practiced and made more alive socially, culturally, economically and politically by following these markers and thereby one person’s behaviour with another person is decided.

The caste hierarchy made life of the ex-untouchables more bitter and miserable. A dalit is always “refused the value of equality, freedom, fraternity and
justice, and has been made to lead an animal and inhuman existence in the name of God, religion, virtue and other means of bookish Knowledge” (Nimbalkar 31). He is often targeted by the upper castes and enforced to limit one’s space. If he dares to disobey the orders of the high castes, he is inflicted with innumerable atrocities like physical attacks, mob-raids, murder or open rapes. We have been witnessing such heinous acts almost every day even after more than sixty years of Indian independence. The only reason of all this menace is the caste bias.

Since the implementation of the Indian constitution, numerous efforts have been made to create fair, just and participative atmosphere for low castes but unfortunately, even in contemporary scenario, they have been exposed to heinous atrocities all around the nation. Caste discrimination is banned at different levels but it continues to manifest itself in various forms. The multi-faceted and wide-ranging phenomenon of the caste system inscribes serious scars on the existence of the low castes. The multifaceted exploitative nature and long persisting continuation of the caste system originates the need to scrutinise various shades of finer nuances, and destructive ramifications of the caste system on the low castes. Therefore, it has become inevitable to study the whole mechanism of this tyrannical caste system and find out the underlying currents of oppression which make the caste system, the most oppressive structure, ideologically sound and practically more rigid. These nuances have created pressing need to look at the caste system from a fresh perspective and undertake a deep investigation to find out how it was used as a strategy to create hegemonic discourses to safeguard the rights of the privileged high castes and dehumanize low castes and at times how it is realistically reflected through the life narratives of the low caste writers.
It needs a serious investigation to understand the caste mechanism in its fullest sense. The critical exploration of the caste system is a complex and complicated exercise. It is difficult to understand caste in its fullest sense as the roots of the caste system are buried deep in distant past. Its gravity has rightly been noted by Dr. Ambedkar. He says, “Caste problem is a vast one, both theoretically and practically. It is an institution that portends tremendous consequences” (Moon et al. 5).

A number of scholars attempted to study its origin and also endeavoured to define it from different perspectives to unfold the mechanism of the caste system in its totality. To comprehend the whole apparatus and functioning of this system, it is inevitable to address some basic questions like What does caste mean? What is it made up of? What is its essence? What is its basic nature? One can find answers to these questions in close study of some of the definitions given by social anthropologists.

Nesfield defines caste as “A class of the community which disowns any connection with any other class and can neither intermarry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their own community.” (Moon et al. 7) This definition implies one of the important features of the caste system that is restriction of one caste from messing up or mixing with other castes. The caste is something which is highly intact and limited to one group or class for all kinds of interactions.

Sir H. Risley extends the same point in a more clear sense. He says

A caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same professional
callings and are regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community (Moon et al. 7).

Sir H. Risley’s definition focuses on the intact groups of families and their strict association with the specific occupation. It means caste is something which is highly restricted to a group of families entitled to follow the assigned professions determined by the divine or human ancestors. It indicates the basic nature of the caste system i.e. a detachment of one group from other and an unequal allotment of labour to people based on ones birth and not by personal ability.

The Caste system is not just confined to birth or profession; rather it has a very tricky concept of purity and pollution. Senart, a French scholar, defines caste highlighting the wicked notion of pollution and exclusion from the community. He says

A close corporation, in theory at any rate rigorously hereditary equipped with a certain traditional and independent organization, including a chief and a council, meeting on occasions of assemblies of more or less plenary authority and join together at certain festivals bound together by common occupations, which relate more particularly to marriage and to food and to questions of ceremonial pollution, and ruling its members by the exercise of jurisdiction, the extent of which varies, but which succeeds in making the authority of the community more felt by the sanction of certain penalties and, above all, by final irrevocable exclusion from the group. (Moon et al. 6)

This definition shades light on the overall nature and function of the caste groups which controls every act of a person in the caste group. More importantly, this
definition scrutinizes the issue of ceremonial pollution which determines one’s scope of social interaction. In short, Caste is a closed corporation of a particular group of people which is censored in all ways by its head of the community, strictly following the traditions and customs of that microscopic social group.

A sagacious and clearer definition, in order to understand the mechanism of the caste system, has been given by one of the most influential sociologists Dr. Ketkar. He defines caste from an entirely different and significantly rational point of view. He defines caste as “A social group having two characteristics (i) membership is confined to those who are born as members and includes all persons so born; (ii) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group” (Moon et al. 7). Dr. Ketkar’s definition sidelines other factors and emphasises the basic aspect that is restricted membership and absence of intermarriage. The close study of these definitions clearly shows that prohibition, or the absence of intermarriage-endogamy is the most significant factor that can be called “the essence of caste” (Moon et al. 8).

In this connection, the clearest and simplest definition has been given by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his milestone work- *Castes in India Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development* wherein he says, “Caste in India means an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy.”(Moon et al. 9)

The above definitions show that caste is something which strictly confines people born in a particular group of families to the same group, which has generally to pursue a common occupation and such members belonging to a group by birth, have strictly to marry in that particular group only. A subtle scrutiny of the aforementioned definitions brings out the most destructive principal of caste, which has also been observed by G. S. Ghurye, i.e. “the hierarchy of groups” (Ghurye 06) To be simpler,
the nature, essence and manifestation of the caste system could be prissily defined as an artificial categorization of people on the basis of birth into different hierarchically ranked groups or castes classified according to occupations and thereby having access to wealth, power and privilege. The simplest definition of caste could ‘what cannot be cast off is a caste’. Caste is like the ingrained skin which is closely attached to the flesh and blood as a fixed component of sinews and muscles. Caste is not like a snake’s skin that can be caste off easily. It begins to bleed if an attempt is made to remove it even slightly.

The caste system has always been a challenging domain of study for the scholars all the time but, unfortunately, very few scholars could succeed in exploring the phenomenon in its fullest sense. It is perhaps because, “the roots of the caste system are buried so deep in a dim and distant antiquity that it has not been possible to arrive at a definite conclusion about the origin and growth of this unique system” (Kumar 116).

The recent study reaches to define the caste system as “an extreme form of social stratification” (Dumont 3). This observation is an important point to understand the external notion of caste but it limits one to the surface level understanding. It does not address the crucial factors that make it more intact and rigid. In order to understand these factors one needs to study the caste system as an institution from an ideological point of view.

The caste system has hardly been understood as an ideological construct. It’s important to understand the ideology of the caste system because it formed the discriminatory practices in Indian society. It destroyed the unity in the society by classifying people into different segments having unequal socio-economical privileges. The caste system created hegemony of dominant castes and thereby
enslaved, dehumanized and persecuted the low castes. Through the caste system, a social hierarchy was incepted and legitimated by a categorical classification system. The crux is that this strategy of classification was not just a cultural product but it was a systematically invented mechanism which is automatically passed on from preceding generation to the coming generations. Therefore, it is indeed a great need to critically scrutinize the ideology of the caste system which bitters the cardinal ideas of an egalitarian society i.e. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice.

Caste system is a structure based on the principal of distinction, separation, fixation and restriction of everything including social interaction, professional entities and marriage practices. It is quite obvious that any distinction or division is usually based on binary oppositions like high/low, superior/inferior, dominant/subordinate and so on. The castes were also divided on the same principle of binary opposition. The castes were hierarchically ranked from superior to inferior. Their occupations were decided, their social status was fixed and this fixation was sanctioned by the religious texts. The trick is that, in the whole process of fixation, the high castes were granted special privileges and the low castes were not even considered as human beings. Through this framework, the occupations, associations and interests of the different castes were predetermined and permanently fixed. Their course of life was predestined and even their burial places were fixed. To understand this wicked trick subtly, a critical review of the formation and legitimization of the caste system should be taken up. The ideology of the caste system lies in revealing this trick.

In all societies, the professional distinction is observed but that does not lead to segregation or observing untouchability. This birth oriented distinction made by the Indians has given birth to the most obnoxious practice in the world. It has no parallel anywhere. It is age old inhuman practice that has been sanctioned by the political,
economic, social and cultural domains for more than four thousand years. The caste system is a highly oppressive structure that divides people into different castes and sub-castes and put them in a hierarchal order.

Broadly speaking, any social system is usually based on certain written or unwritten norms and generally those norms have certain natural, popular, legal, religious, and social sanctions. These sanctions play a vital role in determining the subsistence of the social system. An eminent scholar M. K. Singh draws insightful observations about the vitality of various sanctions in his book *Ambedkar on Caste and Untouchability*. He outlines the significance of legal and religious sanctions in the long persistence of a social order. He says

Obedience by men to rules of society is everywhere secured by means of four sanctions. They are 1) the natural, 2) popular, 3) legal and 4) religious. The natural sanction operates through habit… Popular sanction works through public opinion… There is nothing special in natural sanction or popular sanction. They are to be found everywhere and behind everything that is social in its operation… Legal sanction and religious sanctions are the only two sanctions which are capable of sustaining any given institution. (Singh 155)

By taking into account the vitality of the various sanctions in general and religious sanction in particular, when one investigates the sanction behind caste system, one understands that the sanction behind the caste system is the religious sanction. M.K. Singh supports this thought and says, “The caste as a new form of the Verna system derives its sanction from the Vedas which form the sacred book of the Hindu religion…” (Singh 135)
It is a great tragedy on the part of the low castes that the verna/ caste system has religious sanction. This religious sanction is the peculiar reason behind eternal existence and continuity of the caste system with all of its deformities and follies. In order to understand the ideological conjuring, it is essential to have an understanding of the philosophy that justifies the caste system in first place.

There are many theories of the origin of the Indian caste system but it is worth mentioning religious theory here as it helps to understand the basic ideological trick- how the seed of division of people into hierarchical order was sown in the social system. Social scholars and historians find that the caste system owes its origin to the four Vernas.

The religious theory of the caste system traces religious sanction of the graded classification of people in the verse in Rig Veda. According to the researchers of Hindu religious texts, it is believed that the Primal Man, Purush, destroyed himself to create human society and created four vernas from different parts of his body. One of the scholars, Jayaram V, gives explicit details of the origin and development of the Caste system.

He writes

It is mentioned in Purush Sukta, The tenth Mandala of the Rig Veda, which is the ancient Hindu book, the primal man, Purush, destroyed himself to create a human society and the different parts of his body created the four different Vernas. The Brahmins were from his head, the Kshatriyas from his hands, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet. (Jayram V)

A careful scrutiny reveals that it is not just creation of vernas, rather it is an skillful creation of a hierarchy following a descending order of the body parts equated
with the division of work, unequal social status and various privileges. For example, Brahmans, who got birth from the head of Purush, were considered the intelligent and were allowed to get education and perform religious acts. In the same way, Kshatriyas, the worrier caste, were created from arms, were associated with strength and given privilege to defend the state. Vaishyas were created from the thighs of the Purush and were associated with trade and business. Down the line were shudras who were born from the feet of Purush, were considered only capable of serving the above three classes. A detailed study of the Hindu religious text like Manusmruti would give thorough details of the unequal division of work and strategies to deprive low castes from all means of self realization and empowerment. One could find many evidences of how the various vernas/castes were systematically compartmentalized. Again, it is worth mentioning Jayrama to support the argument. While articulating the religious justification of the caste system, he writes

The caste system was justified by most of the Smriti literature, Manusmruti being the most notorious among them and by such religious scriptures as the Puranas, the sutra literature and scriptures such as the Bhagvadgita and some later day Upanishads. In the law books not only justified rigid caste system but prescribed sever punishments in case of violation. (Jayram V)

The Reg Vedic idea of division of people put Brahmans at the apex position. They were considered as most prestigious, intelligent and wise only because they were born from the head and only on that basis they were granted every authority to dominate. It was a political act to put Brahmans at the top. S. Anand, an editor of Navayana publishers, rightly underlines this fact while commenting on the origin of the caste system and its religious sanction. He writes
Originating more than 2,500 years ago as varnashrama dharma, a theory of social rank, the caste system in India entails that people are born into certain castes. A person’s caste, known as jati, is not a matter of choice but is fixed on the basis of birth. This system of graded inequality has the sanction of religion formulated by Brahmans, who assigned for themselves the top position in the caste system (Anand 2006).

On the other hand, The Shudras were treated as inferior or sub-human because they were born from the feet. They were totally neglected and were thrown at the bottom. It is quite obvious that the division of the people into different vernas was supported with the division of labour and unfortunately, all the good work was assigned to the upper vernas. The Brahmans were given intellectual jobs like preaching. They were usually priests and scholars and so they were at the top. On the contrary, the Shudras were considered as beasts and therefore were deprived of any intellectual job. They were restricted only to the filthy work of serving the upper vernas. This unjust division of labour threw millions of low castes, shudras and untouchables in the deep valley of ignorance. As a result, the low castes were enforced to live a wretched life more painful than that of animals. It has been rightly noted by J. H. Porter. He recorded the unjust division of people and work in the following lines:

In order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned (to men) separate duties and occupations.*** To Brahmans he assigned teaching and studying” [The Veda, sruti, or revelation], ‘Sacrificing for their own benefit and that of others; giving and receiving alms.’…Shudras and the rest-aborigines, outcastes, pariahs- were not men but as beasts that perish, to be taught nothing and given nothing; likewise nothing could be accepted from them (Porter 24)
The subtle understanding of the mechanism of the caste system is a catalyst point in understanding the wickedness in the strategy of the exploitation of the low castes. Worst was the condition of the Untouchables who were referred, in Vedic literature, as “the ayogava, chandala, nishada, and pulkasa”. (Gupta 29) They were excluded even from the fourfold social order. They were below the shudras and hence more feeble than the shudras.

The low castes were systematically humiliated in the Indian society. They were helpless victims of the caste politics. Since long ago, the high caste intellectuals created laws and rules for different castes and made every attempt to make the low castes virtual slaves of the high castes. It has been rightly observed by Raj Kumar. He says

With the Chaturvarnic order, the Indian caste society gradually came to be established in between 500BC-AD500 period. It is during this period that many castes, laws and restrictions were made for the shudras to keep them permanently away from the so-called dwija society and degrade them to the position of virtual slaves without rights of citizenship”. (Kumar 121)

Down the line, most of the caste rules and regulations were made by the high caste people and every arrangement for subjugation of the low castes was made. The best example of this could be seen in the creation of Manusmruti. Regarding the making of Manusmruti, A. H. Salunke, an activist and reformist from Maharashtra, writes:

In 321 B.C. Chandragupta Maurya was in power. Maurya’s rule remained up to 125years. After that King Bruhadattra (who was shudra by caste), Maurya’s ancestor, appointed Pushyamitra as his army chief. When the king
was observing his army, Pushyamitra with his malicious tricks killed the
king and took hold of the power. With the cultural and religious power, the
Brahmans took political power too. Instead of using power in favour of all,
they used it in favour of Brahmans only. To support it religiously, the
making of Manusmruti took place. (Salunke 03).

For historians, the origin of caste and verna system is a controversial issue.
The debate has not reached to any conclusion though hundreds of books are devoted
to resolve the issue. It is noticed that the four vernas were imposed on the Indian
people through the 11th and 12the Ruchas (sacred couplets) in Purush Sukta of the
Rgveda. It is quite clear that the Verna system in India prepared supporting
environment to implement the caste system which was based on the social prestige.
Due to the hierarchal caste system, the higher castes oppressed and exploited the
lower sections in the society in every possible way. It is accepted by all historians that
the lower sections were deprived of all basic human rights and human dignity. The
mechanism of the caste system was so intact and tight that there was a least possibility
of protest against the contribution, suppression and oppression of the low castes. In
the caste system the worth of the untouchables was less than animals. Animals like
dogs, castes and cow were patted, kissed and nourished but men from the untouchable
castes were not even touched. Even mere, mere shadow of the low caste people would
defile the high castes. Ultimately, the cycle of caste conflict and low caste
exploitation resulted into sufferings, poverty, slavery and humiliation of millions of
low castes.

The history of Vedic times shows that the priestly class of Brahmmins
established its dominance and exploited the other classes, castes in different ways.
Very tactfully, the high caste priestly class, continued to dominate and made rituals
inevitable parts of the life of all the other castes right from the birth to death, from the
time of conception to the last rites. The lower sections of the society were skillfully
demoralized and were reduced to completely helpless state. The customs and rituals
imposed on them severely damaged their capacity of thinking. Extremely inhuman
humiliation had made their senses numb. The high castes could exercise their
domination because they were placed at the higher level in the social order and their
rights and authorities were legitimimized. All required amendments for maintaining
difference in the hierarchically divided groups of people were made by the Hindu
religion codifier Manu in his Manusmriti. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice are
the social and moral values which are needed to create an egalitarian society but
unfortunately, these values have no place in Manusmriti. A renowned scholar Dr.
Raosaheb Kasbe mentions some of the discriminatory amendments in Manusmruti to
expose the wicked mechanism of degrading the social status of the low castes and
untouchables in his book *Dr. Ambedkar Ani Bhartiys Rajyaghata*na. Manusmriti says:

Uchcchistamannan detavyam jirnani vasnani cha

Pulakshchaiva dhanyanam jirnastchaiva paricchhada (Manu, 10. 125)

(Kasbe et.al.148)

It implies that remains of the food and old clothes should be given to the shudra.
Remains of the food grain and the old quilt should be given to the shudra.

Na Shudre patakam kinchinna ch samskarmaharti

Nasyadhikari Dharmesti na Dharmatpratishedhanam (Manu, 10. 126)

(Kasbe et.al.148)

It means, eating of prohibiting edibles like onions, garlic etc does not make shudra
sinful. He is not eligible for Upanayan Samskara (the thread ceremony). He is not
entitled to Agnihotra (perpetual maintenance of the sacred fire). However it does not forbid him from Pakyadnya etc.

Shaktenapi hi shudren na karyo dhansanchyaha

Shudro hi dhanamasadya brahmananev badhate (Manu, 10 129)

(Kasbe et.al.149)

It says that a shudra capable of earning wealth shall not accommodate it more than needed for the maintenance of parents and religious activities like Punch Yadnya as accumulation of wealth intoxicates him with ego and he cause suffering to a Brahmin.

It throws light on Manu’s biased attitude about Shudra.

In the Manusmruti the beginning of the caste hierarchy can be seen. Manu- the law maker- assigned all menial work to low castes and left no chance to uplift them. In short, the discourses and the ideologies of high castes were formed through various modes and these ideologies maintained the privileged status of the high castes by giving them social, political, economic and religious rights and inflicting all restrictions on the low castes. It has rightly been noted by Dilip Chavan. He says

Caste system, which is a defining characteristic of Indian society, is a hierarchal system in which the status of the individual is determined by her/his birth and not by deeds. This is a system which has been powerfully strengthened and legitimised by the brahmanical ideology (Chavan 2012)

These ideological tricks were used to play power politics. Power is not a simple connotation. It has variety of implications which are all related to dominance. In a general sense, the word power is defined as, “strength, force, energy, or an ability to do something which a less powerful cannot do.”(Saones 691) In socio-political
context, power is usually conceptualized as a capacity and the most suitable means of exploitation of less powerful groups of people. It is used as a mechanism to marginalize, humiliate and subjugate less powerful masses. Moreover, it is commonly accepted that power is something which has to be constantly performed than being achieved. It is a strategy which someone who is powerful uses in a particular context. Power cannot be used until and unless it is systematically performed and therefore, the whole mechanism of power performance needs to be understood clearly. Michel Foucault, one of the most prominent modern theorists, has pedagogically disclosed the mechanism of power.

He says

“Power must be analysed as something which circulates or as something which only functions in the form of chain…Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization… Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.” (Foucault 98)

The above cited quote clearly implies that power is a set of relations which are created and spread in society through various institutions.

Louis Althusser, a French scholar and Foucault’s teacher, has also disclosed the same mechanism in the most explicit manner. He said that power is maintained through repressive structures which are institutions like law court, prison, the police force, the army etc… These institutions are external forces which are usually used in the last analysis. But, power is more subtly maintained with the internal consent of the people i.e. ideological apparatuses. These ideological apparatuses include political parties, schools, media, family, religion, art and literature. (Barry 164) These ideological structures foster ideas of the dominant groups or the State.
The most crucial part in the processes of power exertion is that the discourses and ideologies are usually formed by the dominant group of people and the same ideas are undoubtedly accepted as truth by the common human beings. These ideologies serve the purpose of the dominant groups which ultimately safeguard their rights and help maintain their status. Once these internal and external forces are controlled, the dominant groups of people use them to manipulate their ideas and exercise power with the consent of the less powerful groups of people.

It is needless to say that whenever there is power, there is a great possibility of domination of powerful and submission of the powerless. By using ideological tricks, the dominant groups of people play power politics and control socio-economic, political and cultural disciplines. Moreover, education system - a political way of maintaining and modifying appropriate discourses (Foucault 64) - is also ruled by the powerful groups. The complete hold of powerful people on all means of production and progress automatically turn powerless people into slaves.

The same tricks were played by the high caste people. They created their ideologies and formed their discourses through religion and religious scriptures. They mischievously formed various inhuman and irrational practices and divided Indian society into various Varnas, castes and sub-castes. They placed themselves in a comfort zone and put dalits at the bottom. By using ideological tricks and dominant discourses the high castes controlled different institutions to implement their ideas through which they could achieve power and further used it to exploit, humiliate and dehumanize the low castes.

The dalits - low castes - were placed at the bottom level in the traditional social order on account of the impact of the codified discriminatory caste system. They were considered as Ati-shudras, Avarnas and were treated as untouchables. These
untouchables-dalits- were enforced to behave as per the wills and wishes of the high castes. They were leather workers, scavengers, sweepers, agricultural labourers, share croppers or self cultivators. High castes always treated them as dirty, wrongdoers, sinful and worthless beings. The dalits were not accepted as common human beings.

These dalits were not allowed to live in their villages rather they had to live in separate colonies away from their respective villages. They were not allowed to enter hotels. They were banned to enter the public places. Dalits were not permitted to pull water from public wells and were not allowed to use footwear or ornaments. They were prohibited to sell goods; even more they were restricted to use common burial grounds too. In such a dreadful situation, they have spent their ages together.

Christophe Jaffrelot very realistically noted the predicament of dalits in the following way:

“They [Dalits] were obliged to wear earthenware around their necks so that their spit did not defile the ground on which the Brahmins walked. They also had to sweep the earth behind them to erase their footsteps or at least maintain good distance from Brahmins to avoid contaminating them with their shadow.” (Jafrelot 21)

Thus, the high castes were being polluted by the touch of dalits; even their shadow was desecrated for them. They were far away from education and were not allowed to interfere in socio-religious activities. They were not allowed to hear sacred texts, and if someone dared to do so, molten lead was used to pour in the ears of the offenders. Because of their illiteracy, they accepted all dirty designs imposed by the high castes.
Dr. Babsaheb Ambedkar, a brilliant scholar and an emancipator of billions of Dalits, had experienced and observed the wretched conditions of dalits and had noted how they were subjected to atrocities, in his writings. He notes

The untouchables are beaten for putting on clothes of good quality. They had been whipped because they used utensils made of metals like copper, etc. Their houses are burnt because they had brought land under cultivation. They are beaten for putting on sacred thread. They are beaten for refusing to carry dead animals and eat carrion or walking through the village with socks and shoes on or not bowing before the caste Hindus. (Joshi 29)

The dalits were recurrently kept on the outset of miseries for one or the other reason. A number of murderous assaults were continuously bestowed upon them. Because of their acute poverty, many times, they had to sleep with empty stomach or in order to extinguish the fire of hunger; they had to eat the flesh of dead animals. Their hunger and starvation had frozen their spirit and made them insane.

All individual is entitled to get some basic rights by births which are called as human rights but the caste system denied the fundamental rights of dalits and appeared as an obstacle to the overall progress of millions of low castes. The caste system was previously interwined in religious system to get it legitimized but further it was used as a powerful political weapon to achieve and practice power. The caste system has adversely affected Dalits. It destroyed harmony and peace of the low castes. It oppressed humanity in the guise of the low castes. J. H. Porter has rightly pointed out the evil nature of the caste system. He says

“Caste organization is seen to put an end to all we consider essential to liberty and happiness, prosperity and progress. It is the most
memorable, comprehensive, and successful attempt ever made by any order to oppress humanity in its own interests.” (Porter 23-24)

Dalits were helpless victims of caste catastrophe. Though both Hindus and Dalits were the products of same nature, Dalits were whipped, harassed and slain only because of their low caste. The high castes usurped their social status. They were not allowed to walk on road with respect. Their broom and earthen pot around their neck were their ornaments and the half naked body and down fixed neck were the symbols of their ‘otherness.’

The denial of humanity for dalits has been rightly outlined by one of the prominent Dalit writers Arjun Dangle. Way back, before the inception of Indian democracy, Dangle notes

The living conditions of these untouchables were shameful. They had no land to toil nor could they follow any profession. They did menial work ordered by higher castes, come rain or shine. Treated like animals, they lived apart from the village, and had to accept leftovers from the higher caste people in return for their endless toil. Their physical contact was said to ‘pollute’ the upper castes- even their shadow was said to have the same effect. Hindu religious texts forbade them to wear good clothes or ornaments or even footwear, and prescribed severe and humiliating punishment for violating these orders. Even for a basic necessity like water they were helplessly dependent on the higher castes’ good will. (Dangle 235-236)

Their persistent alienation, segregation, negation, abnegation and deprivation produced a sense of inferiority in them. Though the dalits were indigenous beings of India, their freedom was snatched away from them. They were never allowed to
practice mainstream life style. They were engulfed in their own superstitious traditions, customs and rituals. An artificial slavery was imposed on them. Consequently, they suffered from socio-economic, political and cultural inferiority.

The dalits had never got any chance to think of themselves or of their degraded status. They were not only socio-culturally absorbed but were physically and economically exploited. These dalits were the products of the system of untouchability. L.R. Balley, an editor of Bheem Patrika, badly criticizes it and says, “Untouchability is not only the system of unmitigated economic exploitation, but is also a system of uncontrollable economic exploitation.” (Balley 21)

This tyrannical caste system had divided both labour and labourers on the basis of caste and not on the basis of personal abilities. Therefore, the dalits were compelled to do their assigned dirty work on very low wages. The low remuneration forced them to take debts for their day to day expenses and so often it was impossible for them to repay it due to high rate of interest. Consequently, in order to repay the debts, the dalits, depressed beings, had to do wageless work on the farm of the money lender for several years or for whole life too.

The besmirched and pathetic condition of the low caste Shudras and the devastating effect of the caste system on them has been noted by G.N. Devy in the introduction to Sharankumar Limbale’s autobiography *The Outcaste*. He says

In the Indian tradition, all functions involving labour, leaving aside the function of governing, learning and trading, were reserved for the Shudras. The menial nature of work, the exclusion from the forms and institutions of learning, the perverse notion of pollution attached to the occupations in which the Shudras were engaged, and the perpetual economic inequality, all of which continued to exist for centuries,
made the life of the Shudras a relentless story of suffering and injustice. (Devy XV)

Thus, such a kind of socio-economic, political and cultural inferiority made the low castes maim. Continuous persecution, ill-treatment and antagonism had shrunken their spirits, frozen their minds and condensed their skills. Due to such inhuman treatment, they suffered from acute poverty, starvation, illiteracy and ignorance. They lost their sense of belonging, sense of security and sense of stability. Automatically, they suffered from inferiority complex that did not enable them to see their own image in their own eyes. They did not find their place in Indian society. They lost everything including self esteem, self identity and social status.

Indian dalits were continuously accused, ostracized and victimized for ages together. They were boycotted and were kept in the clutches of darkness and poverty. They were deliberately kept unaware of their strength and distinguished qualities because self realization would have leaded them to the sense of selfhood, and motivated them to rebel against injustice. After being denied and deprived at every level, they were uprooted from their social and cultural beliefs. They lost their vision to look at life. As a result, they were totally alienated from their own set of values and finally suffered from their irreversible loss of identity and social status.

The caste system excommunicated the millions of low castes and deprived them from all sources of self awareness and progress. An eminent Dalit writer and the first president of Jagtik Marathi Sahitya Samelen, Dr Gangadhar Pantavne, rightly traces the malevolence of the caste system and says, “This system systematically exploited the low castes by inhuman and non-scientific beliefs like- “Brahmin born through mouth, Kshatriya through arms, Vaishya through thies and Shudras through legs.” (Pantavne 40)
Though it was so, in the nineteenth century, through the education imparted in English, social reformers came forward to establish some reformist organizations like Swami Shraddhananda’s Arya Samaj, Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s Brahmo Samaj and Justice M. G. Ranade’s Prarthana Samaj. Before these reformists, the saint poets from Maharashtra advocated equality in their writings but the practice remained different. Even Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had to bring the priest Gagabhatta from Varanasi for his coronation as the Brahmins in Maharashtra declined to coronate him considering him ineligible to be coroneted. The pioneer of social reformation in Maharashtra or even in India is Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. He initiated an open protest against injustice and inequality. He registered the first ever open protest against the caste system. He explained the new value system in his ‘Sarvajanik Satyadharma’. Mahatma Phule in his book Slavery traced the history of slavery in the first nine chapters and further in the next seven chapters he satirized the Brahmins for the double standards. He traces that the religious slavery in India is the root cause of poverty and humiliation of the depressed classes in Indian society. The ideology that he preached, he practiced in his personal life adhered to it honestly with his wife Savitribai and their adopted son Yashwantrao.

Mahatma Phule is the first to create class consciousness in Maharashtra. He led down the tradition of open rebel against religious injustice and caste tyranny. He was socially, intellectually and practically a true radical. Mahatma Phule considered ignorance as the cardinal fater of human sufferings and therefore he advocated need for eradication of ignorance through education to all individuals in the society. The same thought was continued by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who considered Mahatma Phule as his ‘idol’. He gave a valuable message- ‘Educate, Unite and Agitate’. It was
the three-tire gospel of the annihilation of caste. Mahatma Phule’s vision of freedom included religious, social, political and economical freedom.

He established schools, opened orphanage and shelter-houses for widows and led social movements. He paved the way for resistance and protest that was taken up at the later stage by Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and many other social reformers, writers and activists. Mahatma Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar formed the trinity of making India conscious of the caste based inequality, injustice, exploitation and humiliation after the introduction of the British rule. Especially after Indian independence, social consciousness was brought through implementation of Indian constitution and right to education.

During and even after the emergence of the revolutionary souls- Mahatma Phule, RajarshiShahu Maharaj and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar- this tyrannical caste system devalued the low castes. They remained illiterate, poor, and mute till the dawn of twenty first century. It was Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and Dr. Ambedkar who rebelled against the orthodox inhuman practices of the caste system and attempted to bring awareness and positive change in the life of the low castes through unfolding the hidden mechanisms of the subjugation of the low castes. At first Mahatma Phule, through poetic expression, unfold the tricks of the high caste people and the causes of the subjugation of the Shudras- the low castes. He says in Marathi which could be translated in simple English as

Lack of access to education led the Shudras to a loss of intellect, lack of intellect led to the loss of fitness, lack of fitness led to the loss of dynamism, lack of dynamism led to the loss of wealth, lack of wealth broke down the Shudras and the entire disaster and calamity has fallen on them only because of lack of education. (Phadke 253)
Through such insightful verse, Mahatma Phule tried to reveal the significance of education and made the low castes aware about necessity of pursuing education as it was the only way for their enlightenment and empowerment. He set the tradition to form counter hegemonic discourses through writing and practice which was later followed by many low caste Dalit intellectuals and writers. The same motive of Dalit awareness was followed by Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj who opened schools for the low caste students and initiated the first assertive action towards low castes’ upliftment by implementing reservation policy for the low castes. The same chain of Dalit awareness was continued by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who gave a valuable message “Educate, Unite and Agitate.” The whole corpus of the revolutionary work of the trio-Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar- brought tremendous change in the low castes and they followed the path of education and agitation.

With the long and continuous struggle of the vanguard leaders like Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and many others till date, the shell of the caste system was broken down and shattered the shackles of slavery of the low castes. They opened up the doors of education and enlightenment for the broken and ground down castes and taught them to fight for justice, freedom and equality. Millions of low caste people followed the path of Dr. Ambedkar and started rebelling against the tyranny of the caste system.

After continuous protest for several years, they achieved their rights and acquired social status. In addition to this, right to education sharpened their intellect, broadened their views and gave them new vision to look around the world. It enabled them to enlighten themselves. They registered their protest at multiple levels and unfolded the unexplored evil nature of the malevolence of the caste system which was
the result of the sorrows and sufferings of the low castes. Though they succeeded in breaking down the clutches of slavery and untouchability, the lacerated wounds of their traumatic past recurrently tortured them.

The Dalits, in order to get relief from their sorrowful past, selected the tool of art and literature. They produced their own literature- ‘Dalit Literature’. The core of this literature is to unfold the tyranny of the caste system and to record the journey of the marginalized castes from periphery to the central locus. It rejects inequality and puts common man in the centre. Baburao Bagul an eminent scholar and prolific writer, gives a very explicit definition of dalit literature. He says

Dalit literature is inimical to untouchability, slavery, inequality and pain. As long as there is untouchability and slavery in this country, Dalit literature will definitely exist. Dalit literature is that literature which advocates human liberties glorifies man, opposes staunchly the supremacy of lineage, race and caste. (Bagul, Presidential Address)

Another eminent Scholar, Tarkateerth Laxmanshastri Joshi defines Dalit literature as follows

Dalit literature is that literature which in an artistic manner shows the agony of Dalits, their painful perplexity, family deterioration, poverty, humiliation and impoverished condition. (Asmita Darsh 75)

The persecution they suffered for years after years inscribed lacerated wounds on their body and psyche. They suffered from physical and mental scares and they found the proper outlet to their repressed thoughts in art and literature. The persistent humilities resulted in the loss of their confidence, loss of self esteem, loss of dignity and loss of central locus in the society. Therefore, through literature, Dalit writers tried to gain their
self worth, self pride, self dignity, social status and space in the central locus. More clear and wider perspective of Dalit literature has been given by Sharankumar Limbale.

He says in his interview

Dalit literature is a literature of movement. It stands for democracy, equality, fraternity and freedom. Man is holy and more important than heaven, religion and nation. Dalit literature is a literature of emancipation of Dalits. It defends human values. Dalit literature is different from other literature because of its language, its ideology, its goal, its objective, its pain and pangs.” (http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=content&sd=ArticleID=15011#sthash.qlDRjCwL.dpuf)

Dalit literature is a conscious and deliberate attempt of breaking down the existing socio-cultural and literary norms and to recreate their own standards. They used literature to depict their rebel against dominant ideologies and struggle to achieve the central locus in the society. They produced variety of literature but particularly through autobiographies they presented a realistic picture of the tyranny of the caste system and its multifarious effects on the low castes, tribes and communities. Their autobiographies in fact are saga of sorrows and sufferings of the millions of low castes, tribes and communities. These are realistic documents of unforgettable miseries and degraded social status inflicted on them by the evil caste system.

The Dalit writers have recorded the multifaceted tyrannies of the caste system and its role in uprooting them from every aspect of life. Through their writings in general and autobiographies in particular, Dalit writers have recorded the devastating effects of the caste system on the socio-economic and physical exploitation of the low
castes and also have scribbled down the painstaking efforts they took to reach to the central locus of the society. They have tried to reach to central space in the caste ridden society through their writings. Therefore, a humble attempt is made in the present research work to study, analyze and examine the malevolence of caste tyranny and struggle of selected dalit writers to reach to the central locus (position) in all spheres of life depicted in the select Dalit autobiographies.

Autobiography, since nineteenth century has been an outstanding and distinctive form of literature. Literature is an outcome of synthesized thoughts, ideas, views, opinions, perspectives and emotions of a writer. An individual, in particular a sensitive and sensible, always strives to express himself in different ways. An autobiography gives a tremendous scope to fulfil the desire of an individual to unfold the world within him or her. An autobiography helps fulfil the natural urge of self revelation. Autobiography gives human being an opportunity to tell one’s own life story at full length in one’s own words to the fullest extent.

The genre of autobiography has been defined in different ways. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines autobiography as “an account of an individual human life written by the subject himself.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 854) The Universal Dictionary of the English Language describes autobiography as “Art and practice of writing a narrative of one’s own life” (Universal Dictionary of the English Language 67). On the same line, Webster’s Dictionary defines autobiography as “a written account of one’s own life.” (Webster 64)

All the above mentioned definitions emphasize the main thrust of the attempt i. e. Objective recording of one’s own life; but these definitions do not signify the scope of the concept. D. G. Naik, an eminent scholar rightly outlines the same. He says, “the details of any given life, therefore, when accommodated in a story or
narrative inevitably take a shape or form; in literary terminology it is called the form of autobiography.” (Naik 44)

At first, Robert Southey used the term autobiography in 1809. Semantically ‘auto’ mean “self”, ‘bios’ means “life”, and ‘graphy’ means “the act of writing”. In simple words, autobiography can be defined as a conscious and deliberate attempt of writing out one’s own life story by the person himself. Oxford English dictionary defines autobiography as, “an account of a person’s life written by the person himself.” (Saones 691)

Richard. G. Lillard defines autobiography more explicitly. He says, “An autobiography is a narrative of writer’s life from childhood to date, written in first person from his own point of view and in his own personal style.” (Lillard 01). Studying the above definition, one can define autobiography as a graph, record of the life of a person written by the person himself. It gives full autonomy to the writer to write out his past experiences in a chronological order to create a meaningful pattern of his past life experiences. In autobiography, the writer shares his life experience with the reader through the recording of significant past memories narrated in a coherent sequence. He depicts how he created his life in the manner he chose to mould it through his struggle, tears, ups and downs, sufferings, sorrows, trials and tribulations in his life and surrounding.

The autobiographer presents himself through autobiography. He creates a meaningful outline out of his past experiences through introspection and self analysis. These past experiences states much about Who is he? What did he do? How did he achieve his goal? What obstacles he had to face? How did he overcome the challenges? The writer’s answer to these questions involves him in the process of self realization and self unfoldment. The writer becomes aware of his true self before
actually writing an autobiography. In other words, an autobiography, in fact, is born when the writer becomes conscious of his true self. An autobiography makes the unseen world transparent wherein the writer’s subjective personality becomes visible to others. Linda Anderson rightly remarks the same and says, “An autobiography is a public exposure of a private self.” (Anderson 07)

Autobiography is an outstanding form of introspection and self revelation. Self accounting and self reflection are integral parts of autobiography. Liberating the writer’s personality and throwing a great search light on his life are the objectives an autobiographer strives to accomplish. Autobiographies facilitate the writer to present a living person by creating a logical sequence of his past experiences. Richard G. Lillard makes it clear. He says

“By making original observation from his vintage points, an autobiographer makes himself seem to be a living person. By using reference points of base period that he has found in his particular environment of time and space, he makes history come alive around himself.” (Lillard 01)

Self analysis enables the autobiographer to find the essence of one’s life beyond the temporal existence. This helps the writer to transcend the historical circumstances. The writer’s detachment and objectivity are needed for creation of a truthful autobiography.

An autobiography differs from other forms of self revelation. It is not a diary which is a record of daily experiences or the book of memoirs which discloses the memorable incidents in the past. So often, the records of memoirs are linked with autobiography but they are structurally different from autobiography. An autobiography is an entirely different form of self expression. The chronological
narrative and objective reflection of the writer’s personality make an autobiography more credible than diary or a book of memoire.

D.G Naik, an eminent scholar, advocates the creditability of autobiography. He says, “It is autobiography and not biography that may give us the truthful transmission of personality.” (Naik 14) In autobiography, the untold truth of the writer’s life is told to the reader by the writer himself in his own style. The specific features of autobiography are objectivity, detachment, chronological narration, self-revelation, subjective reflection, mirroring social life, truthful recording of past, structural and stylistic mode of self-disclosure and a brand impartial point of view. All these aspects help the writer to find an expressivemode to release one’s personality.

Early attempts of writing autobiographies are made by St. Augustine’s Confessions written in 399 AD and St. Teresa’s Life of Herself. Jean Rousseau’s confessions mark the beginning of the genre of autobiography. The gener of autobiography has been used by different people from different sections of society as it provides enough space and liberty to recreate an unrevealed personality of self. Autobiography as a literary canon has always remained in the fluctuating state. Autobiography gives a legitimate outlet to diversified emotions of different kinds of people from different periods. The romantic autobiography aimed at transforming the truth of an individual into universal truth. Ray Pascal, in his essay- ‘Design and Truth in Autobiography’ remarks the same. He says

Wordsworth is the first autobiographer to realize that each man constructs out of unique framework of meaningful events and that the deepest purpose of autobiography is to compose the accounts of life as a projection of the real self on the outer world.(Pascal 12)
Autobiography gives aesthetic pleasure to the writer by developing writer’s character in a coherent sequence. Autobiography does not need imagination power like a fiction or brilliant study like history or science it just requires the skill of correlating one’s past experience in a coherent sequence which will produce a meaningful text.

An autobiography not only shows the writer as a hero coming with flying colors but it also records the traumatic life experiences, his anger, sufferings, subjugation, persecution, exploitation and struggle. Through autobiography, the writer also shades light on the forces and factors which contributed in the making of his personality. The real splendor of an autobiography lies in the development and florishment of a distinct self of the writer. Roy Pascal points out the same and says, “In an autobiography, proper attention is focused on the self.” (Pascal 41)

As autobiography basically deals with self of the writer, it is not the limitation of the genre. The way an individual can not be separated from the society, the same way autobiography also can not be detached from the society. In autobiography one finds traces of social happenings sometimes in clear or sometimes in unclear manner.

There has been long tradition of writing autobiographies by men and women in India. Some of the popular works by male autobiographers could be listed out as- My Experiments with Truths by Mahatma Gandhi, An Autobiography of an Unknown Indian by Nirad Chaudhari, Autobiography of a Native Alien by Zulfikar Ghosh etc. Some of the prominent women’s autobiographies could be referred here like- With No Regrets by Krishna Hutheesingh, My story by Kamala Das, and Prison and Chocolate by Nayantara Sahgal etc.

Though it was so, the low caste and underprivileged sections of society were far away from the form of self revelation till early decades of the 20th century. The
literature of the downtrodden emerged with great power derived from negation, abnegation and unbearable physical and permanent psychological scars and bleeding wounds in the beginning of the 20th century. Their writings invariably reflect a strong feeling of protest against the persistent malevolence of the caste tyranny and its devastating effects on all low castes, tribes and communities. It shows how domination and humiliation is inflected upon them by the caste system and how it has diversely affected their lives.

Moreover, the tales of Dalit autobiographers like - P.I. Sonkamble’s Athavaniche Pakshi, Daya Pawar’s Baluta, Laxman Gaikwad’s Uchalya- The Branded, Laxman Mane’s Upara- An Outsider, Kishor Kale’s Kolhatyache Por-Against All Odds, Kumud Pawade’s Antasphote, Baby Kamble’s Jina Amche The Prisons We Broke, Urmila Pawar’s Eaidan and others reveal a shocking phenomenon of social injustice, hatred, sufferings and malevolence of caste tyranny.

P. I. Sonkamble, a dalit student at Milind Collage, Aurangabad wrote autobiographical anecdotes to publish in his college magazine. He later published them as an autobiography entitled Athavaniche Pakshi in 1969. It was the first attempt of the Dalit writer to record his sorrowful past. This autobiography was appreciated by every strata of the society and established Sonkamble as writer. Through his autobiography, Sonkamble depicted the malevolence of the caste tyranny and its adverse effects on his life. It also records his heart stunning struggle to establish his identity through education. Immediately after Sonkamble, Daya Pawar published his autobiography Baluta which is considered to be the first Dalit autobiography as it was published before Sonkamble. In his autobiography, Daya Pawar presented the story of a low caste child who obtained education through hard work and became a successful person in life.
Along with the Mahar community the tribals and the nomadic communities also published their life narratives. In December 1980, Laxman Mane came up with *Upara* (An Outsider) in which he described the degraded lifestyle, unjust customs, traditions and heartrending sufferings of *Kaikadi* community. Uttam Bandu Tupe’s *Katyaaverchi Pote* records the sorrows and the sufferings of *Matang* community that earns its livelihood by skinning dead animals and begging in the village.

Shankarrao Kharat published *Taral Aunitaral* to focus on the wretched condition of the *Yeskar* community- a Mahar sub-caste and his hard effort to pursue education and to achieve respectable position in academic and social life. Nanasaheb Jhodge’s autobiography *Phanjar* (Picking Thorn) and Dadasahib More’s , *Gabal* was published in 1983 which highlighted the problems and predicaments of Nomadic Tribe *Pingle Joshi*.

Women writers also penned down their anxieties of being dalit and women. This tradition was set by Kumud Pawade with the publication of her autobiography *Antasphot* in 1981. Shantabai Kamble published *Mazya Jalmanchi Chittarkatha*. Baby Kamble came up with *Jeena Amcha* and Mallika Amar Sheikh, wife of an eminent dalit writer Namdev Dhasal, wrote her autobiography *Mala Udvasta Vhayaichai*. Mukta Sarvagode published her autobiography *Mitaleli Kavade* (Closed Doors). *Marankala*(Death Pangs) by Janabai Girhe was followed by Shantabai Dani’s autobiogphy *Ratrandis Amha*. Other eminent dalit women autobiographies are *Dor* by Najubai Gavit, *Andharatun Prakashakade* by Shakuntala Sonone, *Vardan* by Vaishali Survase and *Teen Dagdanchi Chool* by Vimal More. An eminent poet, Narayan Surve’s wife’s autobiography entitled *Mastaranchi Savli* and Nanda Meshram’s autobiography *Me Nanda* are recently published.
Down the line, Madhav Kandvilkar’s *Mukkampost Devache Gothane*, Sharankumar Limbale’s *Aakkarmashi - Out Caste* and Dr. Naradra Jadav’s *Amcha Baap Ani Aamhi* are the most remarkable works of autobiographies. The most realistic picture of untouchability was presented by Rustum Achalkhamb in his autobiography *Gavki*. An epoch making dalit autobiography *Uchlya - The Branded* was published in 1989 by Laxman Gaikwad which disclosed the problems and predicaments of Nomadic community- Pardhi- which is branded as thieves from their birth. He gave a heartrending description of their lives, poverty, hunger and struggle. Bhimrao Gasti’s autobiography *Berad*, M.S. Pagare’s *Asamdi* and Atmaram Rathod’s *Tanda* have contributed prominently to widening the horizon of Dalit personal narratives. In 1994, *Kolhatyacha Por* (Against All Odds) by Kishor Shantabai Kale was published. In this autobiography Kishor Kale drew the picture of the multifaceted humiliation of Kolhati women and the awful life inflicted on their children.


Dalit autobiographies are realistic depiction of the life of torment and anguish experienced by and being felt by Dalits. The pain, intense suffering and fire revealed through dalit autobiography is very disturbing. These autobiographies are the records of dalit cultural revolution. (Nimbalkar 137)

The Dalit autobiographies represent the heart stunning reality of Dalit life. These autobiographies present the pain, protest, hope and desire to reach to the centre of all spheres of life of all depressed and humiliated people. These autobiographies
are a saga of sorrows and protest against the unjust practice of the caste system. Despite belonging to different castes, tribes and communities, Dalit autobiographies record how low castes were victimised by the malevolence of the caste tyranny and how courageously dalits fought to break down the shell of the tyrannical caste system.
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